



そこから世界観見るぞよ?

Tatsunokotarou
竜ノ湖太郎
illustration
天之有

そして
兎は
煉獄へ

角川
スニーカー
文庫

この命よ、今こそ
燃え上がれ

!!!

くどう
久遠
あすか
飛鳥

散るならばせめて、
仲間の為に。

黒
ウサギ



お前が魔王か
アジリダカーハ

さかまき
逆廻
いざよい
十六夜

アジニ
ダカーハ

あの壁の
向こうに何があるか。

お前は、それを知りたくないのか？

夢の始まり





Interlude 1

-Little Garden Upper Level 3rd gate; Touriten^[1]

Surrounded with floating sacred lotuses, a path way lined with peach trees led to Heavens Gate. In this land where usually the only sounds came from the running water or the blowing wind, sharan, the gracious sound of a bell rang out. The sound of the bell moved the clear air of heaven, echoing from nowhere to everywhere.

The bells sound called about a beautiful cool wind, and made the glimmering silver hair flutter.

“.....”

Sharan, Shiroyasha moved another step with a rare expression of concern and looked up.

That face did not have her usually jovial grin. While standing with an expression of great resolve, her eyes showed nothing but seriousness. Shiroyasha softly touches the heavens gate that was shut closely.

Touriten; made to connect heaven and earth with the purpose to send out the Godly Alliance community that thought to destroy Demon Lords, “**Divine Army**”.

If those powerful gods that were seated in the third ranks were to descend on to earth with their original form, just being there would be a disaster that would shake both heaven and earth.

The gate that was made in order reduce this effect is the Heavenly Gate Touriten.

The Touriten that makes reversal of the Astral and Material^[2] possible can send out gods and Star spirits in the form best fit for their environment.

Shiroyasha, who kept her silver-white hair fluttering , kept her hands lain on the gate while bitterly chewing her lips.

“..... I suppose its impossible to open without being in the “**Divine Army**”.”

She pushed the gate, but the Touriten did not move an inch.

With Shiroyasha’s power destroying it would have been easy, but there was no guarantee that the Touriten would still function properly. It was not that there was no other way, but descending from heaven without using the gate was strictly prohibited.

If a god were to descend without using the gate, it would cause a disaster regardless of the god's intention. Also, if a former Demon Lord like Shiroyasha were to destroy the gate, she would have made enemies with all the gods. While biting her lips with a mortified expression Shiroyasha strongly closed her eyes and turned the hand that touched the Touriten into a fist.

"I do not have time to meet Taishakuten^[3]..... For the situation on the lower floors, every second counts."

Shiroyasha closed her eyes, and sent her consciousness to the lower floors.

The death match held in Kouen City against Ouroboros.

The prince and company that is leading the vampirised giants.

The duel style game that is being played in Kouen City, "Tain Bo Cuailnge in AthnGabla".

Sakamaki Izayoi, Kudou Asuka, Kasukabe Yō, all were fighting with enemies that had as much experience as a Demon Lord, and were fighting with their own abilities.

Watching the both sides fight in heaven, Shiroyasha knew within moments that "No Name" had a chance of winning.

The "No Name" that went through harsh battles were no longer a group of amateurs. Stopping the three that were beginning to understand their heaven sent ability was not necessary. Also she had some feelings of worry, she had enough confidence in them to watch while eating rice crackers.

But not even Shiroyasha saw through everything. She especially didn't expect The Demon Lord of Confusion to team up with Ouroboros.

The Demon Lord of Confusion that made use of the undeveloped prodigal heart of youths succeeded in merging with Salamandra's young leader and obtained the Horn of the Dragon King of the Sea of Stars.

The clenched fist gripped with more strength. Shiroyasha held some responsibility in the Sandora's loss. Sandora had finally reached age twelve this year. In the world filled with gods and buddhas, she was way too young. No different than a newborn.

The reason why Shiroyasha gave her such a heavy duty was because she thought she can always help her when it was needed.

.....Thinking of it now, it was foolish and irresponsible act, Shiroyasha thought.

No matter what kind of reason Salamandra had, they should not have left a young girl in the seat of a leader.

While being the only one to be outspoken of her uniqueness, she couldn't use her power and influence to right what was needed. If Sandora had been protected, the Demon Lord would not have resurrected again.

"Thinking not to repeat the mistake made three years ago, I even returned my own **[Divinity]** and fought but.... My actions are always one step too late."

There was no end to the regrets. The great alliance of floor masters that Canaria made in order to destroy the Dystopia Demon Lord was also destroyed.

That day three years ago..... If Shiroyasha returned her **[Divinity]** and fought with them, the situation would not have been this bad.

And now, the lower floors had another disaster released on them.

The oldest Demon Lord; the one named a "**Last Embryo**", the ultimate God Slayer.

(*Demon Lord Aži Dakāha..... in front of his "another cosmology" even the main gods would have trouble winning. But if it was me.....my **[Host Master privilege]** can definitely seal him for all eternity.....!!*)

Steeling her resolve with conflicting emotions, Shiroyasha looked up. She was not given permission to use her Host Master privileges.

She reigned among the gods cosmology as the sun god of the Geocentric model. In order to preserve her power, she put down scientific oppositions. But with the progression of human history, the arrival of brave sailors, and wise astrologists, her power decreased, and was chased into the horizon of the White night. Now, she only holds as much power as an ordinary sun god.

"....."

-----But. That is a story solely in the range that can be observed by humans.

The truth of the Geocentric model rests in a place where, no matter what efforts are made, humans can not reach. Beyond stars, time, and universe is where the truth lies. When hosting a game, if Shiroyasha expands her power to that extent, her power would endlessly expand, and the ones playing the game would be trapped in a paradox game. If Shiroyasha makes him enter

the horizon of the white night, where there is no exit, she can trap the player along with the host of the game, herself, for all eternity.

“The problem is the time of traveling..... but the lower floors are fighting for every second of survival. Although it will be a bit rough, I will have to destroy Touriten and—“

“—— That would be a problem. If you just went ahead and destroyed when it was finally fixed, you’d crush our position.”

Ah, Shiroyasha turned around in surprise.

Since she tried to use the Touriten without permission, she knew that someone would come after her. But this was too fast. Another reason why Shiroyasha was surprised was because she knew the owner of that voice.

The cool, projecting voice made the peach tree’s branches sway, and became a whistling wind that glided away.

As to face Shiroyasha with a firm stance, the owner of the voice, shook her hair that resembled the color of a golden rice field during harvest, laughed with a troubled expression.

————— This is unexpected. To think they would have her come after me.

Although twisted, Shiroyasha is one that resides in Buddhism . Therefor, the pursuer being the 12 Devas^[4] or the chief god class Wisdom Kings would be the most logical.

If it comes to worst, she was prepared to fight the strongest of gods, but holding over half the Sun Authorities, they were not an opponent Shiroyasha could not defeat.

But, her opponent was neither of them.

Having the strength rivaling both, a peculiar existence.

This one is the most irregular of disciples Buddhism took under its wings out of the entire Little Garden. Her name is-----

“Its been long—— “Great Sage Equaling Heaven”, Sun Wukong!!”

“That's an old name. I told you know its Tousen Shou Butsu^[5].“

Rustling her golden rice-like hair, her deep green eyes glimmered with laughter.

Contrary to her mature voice, she had an appearance that only looked like a thirteen or fourteen year old girl. But the power and shine radiating from her eyes alone displayed an air of an over achieving fighter.

Facing the “Great Sage Equaling Heaven”, Shiroyasha unfolded her fan and talked.

“Hmph..... Even if you search the entirety of Little Garden you would only find a handful of people who call you by that extremely minor Buddhist name. Besides, even the person who gave you that name, the Siddh***”

“Hey you idiot, stop.”

“Oops, my mistake.”

In the Heavens, there are names that you are not allowed to say.

Cough, clearing her throat and Take 2.

“Besides, even the person who gave you that name, the ***dhārtha guy calls you Great Sage. In this kind of situation telling me to alter how I call you is a funny story. If you really want me to change what I call you, tell Si*****tha^[6] to change it first.”

“..... I won’t retort since there would be no end to it, but a be little more careful, you Shameful God.”

Puffing her nose and standing tall, Shiroyasha, and giving a large sigh with a tired expression, Great Sage Equaling Heaven.

Although doing an idiotic routine, there is no god or buddha that does not know her name.

—————“Great Sage Equaling Heaven”, Sun Wukong.

One of the too infamous Demon Lords from Chinese legend “Journey to the West”.

As the Head of the community that the Bull Demon King and the Saurian Demon King once resided, Seven Great Demon Kings, she is an old powerful being that challenged gods into harsh battles. The Seven Demon kings that were in this community all were crowned with the title of “Great Sage”, but the only one who was called such as a nickname was Sun Wukong. Both the beasts that were subordinates of the flag as well as earth gods all admit that she has the abilities to be given that title. There are many who believe “Great Sage Equaling Heaven” was the King amongst gods. There are even these believers amongst the gods.

But after “Great Sage Equaling Heaven” and the six kings sealed their alliance, they fought a destructive war against the Shangdhi and Taoist

gods, and are barely defeated by the hands of the 12 Devas and Siddār***. The story following that is too famous for explanation. After five hundred years of imprisonment, she later follows her teacher, Xuanzang, to India, would be the most common part of her story.

But that is only a story that was leaked into the outer world. To the gods and buddha's of the world of Little Garden, they see more importance in the aspect other than that of a Demon Lord.

Neither a hermit, a spirit, nor a god.

Given life in the core of the planet, and delivered from the ocean bottom by volcanic eruption; and existence of no duplicate, Demi-Celestial Being- a planet made "Candidate of Origin."

"Of all people, I did not expect you to pursue me. I was expecting Bonten^[7] to come."

"Nnnn-.....Well. Our side also has its problems. To be honest, I also find it odd. With you as an opponent I wouldn't be able to win even if we did a hand stand. Its like a baby picking a fight with his parents. Its to much weight for a immature person like me."

"Is that so? Your immaturity was before you entered Buddhism. A problem child like you is now a third rank. It doesn't seem to much of a hopeless fight."

While making small talk, Shiroyasha tried to figure out her opponent. Without being given a mission as a Demi-Celestial Being, born on the peak of Mount Huaguo, even when Buddhists took her in she was relatively left alone.

Even Shiroyasha did not know the reason behind this. Prevailing theories are that it was to balance the power in the Buddhist realm, or she was to be used as a final trump card, but the truth is in the dark.

She is a Demi-Celestial Being, with both her spirit and her prowess are assured. If it was simply measured by battle power, she even rivaled Taishakuten.

And she was an old friend of Shiroyasha. Those reasons were probably why she was sent.—Thinking up to there, Shiroyasha finally noticed something very important.

"Mu... Wait, Great Sage. You said that Touriten has already finished repairs right?"

"Aah. It only connects up to the the 4th level, but there no problem when using it normally."

As soon as she received these words from the "Great Sage Equaling Heaven", Shiroyasha was filled with the color of relief.

If that was true than there would be no need for Shiroyasha to go to the lower realm.

If the official "**Divine Army**" was to be summoned then there would no unneeded sacrifice. Even if any did emerge, the lower realms would stay relatively flat compared to the damage it would have received. That was an easy price to pay.

Letting her anxiety loose and her shoulders relax, Shiroyasha pouted a little while complaining.

"If that's the case it would have been best if you said so..... Even I was prepared this time!————and which community will be mobilized? The 12 Devas, or the Hachi Bushū^[8], or the Godai Myouou^[9]? If it were any power near that group I would be relieved."

"....."

Contrary to Shiroyasha, who was brightening her voice, Great Sage quietly closed her eyes.

Avoiding immediate response, she said with emphasis, as if to lecture.

"..... The "**Divine Army**", *will not mobilize.*"

"Ha?"

"Its not just the official "**Divine Army**". Including the reserved Angels and the Olympian gods, they will not fight with "Aži Dakāha". Of course, this includes irregularities like me."

Shiroyasha took those words as if hit by a blunt weapon, and weakened her posture.

The color of relief immediately vanished, and she became obviously pale. If that was the case, it's like the gods have forsaken the lower floors.

Restraining the voice that almost reflexively roared, she asked with trembling lips.

"W.....What is the meaning of this?"

"It's like I said. The gods of the upper realm have decided to abandon the current human history. With the powers of "Aži Dakāha", "**Absolute Evil**", that high, The gods have no method of battling it..... It's reached the time limit. This Little Garden is to be abandoned."

"wha....."

Given the sudden confession, Shiroyasha lost her words.

"W, Wait. Three years ago the conclusion was that Human History can be saved. Bu, but why? Why did they suddenly speed up their end result? Only when half of the upper realms "Region Master"s approve, the remaking of Little Garden should not be granted.....!?"

"I don't know. Three years ago there was Canaria, the result of human history was almost reached. But now the situation has changed..... Besides, 3rd level, 4th levels have the right to move to the New Little Garden. The main communities have already begun packing. "

This time Shiroyasha really turned pale.

The upper communities were mainly made of the many gods. Not only did those people chose to abandon Little Garden, but that they have already made preparations to move.

Even if they were afraid of the God Slayer, this was unheard of.

(*Who was it!? Is Ouroboros that large a community!?*.....)

"G, Great Sage. This is of someone's schemes. The only ones that had agreed to recreating Little Garden were the fallen gods of the north. Changing their thinking all of the sudden is strange, don't you think?"

"I do. But that's not helping. Until the "final challenge to humanity" is either sealed or defeated, this would be hard to overturn."

"Th, Then if you used the "**Divine Army**".....!"

Ah! Shiroyasha rethinks. Regardless of the fact that Touriten is repaired, the Army showed no sign of moving. Though the heavenly army consists of a mix of gods, the ones leading it are the Buddhists.

Realizing what this entailed, she looked at Great Sage Equaling Heaven as if to watching something unbelievable.

"It can not be..... The Buddhists, too? The Buddhists also abandoned the lower floors? Is that so, Great Sage Equaling Heaven!!!!"

"..... I'm sorry. This is no longer something I can control. This mostly consists of those who are determined to make this succeed. By the time the

lower floors are abolished, the plan is that the upper realms have already moved."

"What.....What the hell!!^[10]"

The single moment of rage cracked the road, and while the scenic peach trees broke a fissure ran about.

Shiroyasha released her godly power with her rage, and from her silver hair heat hazes started to float.



Her golden eyes were dyed red, portraying the setting of the sun.

There was no sign of her usual mild nature.

She gave off a presence that made one think that the heavens were stormed and havoc ran about on earth. The power Shiroyasha released along with her anger could shake the stars and even twist their path.

But Great Sage Equaling Heaven looked with calm eyes, and said with a voice that was void of all emotion.

"In order to make a new Little Garden..... to restart history, the Authorities of half the suns are needed. The people of the upper realms are searching recklessly for you to take it back."

"Hou. Those dogs want to kill me?——— Aah. That's right. Throwing away my position and reeking havoc was another option. I am sick of this idiocy from the bottom of my heart."

Having over half of the **[Twenty Four Authorities of the Sun]**, the greatest Sun god.

If she waved about her powers, she could be a threat rivaling the final challenge of humans.

Twisting the laws, the balance of night and day go mad, and the boundary of Heaven and Earth would crumble.

"The reason why I went under the Buddhist realm was because I believed in your Justice. Obeying them, I protected the peace of Little Garden. No, I couldn't protect everything. But even so, I have no obligation to abandon the lower floors for your convenience!!! Fine, bring a hundred million or a thousand billion!!! For now I will turn from the avatar of the White Night to the endless night, and swallow everything along with the stars.....!!!"

The beautiful silver hair began emitting darkness with the same quality as the night.

The eternal night——— shows the complete opposite movement of the white night, and is the name of the phenomenon in which "the sun does not rise". As the Celestial Being that controls the progress of the sun, ruling over the night was easy. So long as most of the main gods were sun gods, the number of gods that could be an opponent to her did not even reach the number of her fingers. Although born a sun god, being able to control the night, she was especially well versed in killing sun gods.

Although not as powerful as the the time she ruled all cosmologies as the Geocentric model, her powers were still overwhelming.

Given the throne of a god and the crown of a Demon Lord. Born with both of these rights, the Singular Most Powerful Celestial Being, Little Garden rank #10.

The “Demon Lord of the White Night” was about to unleash all of her was about to unleash the entirety of her powers.

“Flee away, Great Sage Equaling Heaven. You are of no match against me.No, the same goes for the gods. So long as they are gods they cannot defeat I, a **“Final Challenge to Humanity”**. Along with the **[Sun Authorities]**, **“Absolute Evil”** shall be permanently sealed into the horizon of the white night. I will take this Little Garden as my coffin.”

“..... What about the outside world? Facing the Final Challenge’s are needed to complete the Human History.”

“As if I care. What I want to defend are those living in Little Garden. The world I love. Even if Little Garden loses its purpose of existence, I want to protect the treasures of this world. I care not of the world outside of this place.”

She said those words in a way that implied it was also her final warning.

If Great Sage Equaling Heaven would not budge, that it was inevitable. Even if they shared a friendship, there were paths that they couldn’t share. This was one of those times.

“.....Won’t you retreat?”

“ I will not.”

“You can never get out of a paradox game. You’ll be trapped out of Little Garden forever.”

“It's on my resolve.”

Yes. Her resolve was already made.

She would be saying her eternal farewells to her comrades in “Thousand Eyes” and those in “No Name”. But even so, she had things she wanted to protect. Because of it, her resolve was set in stone.

“.....So that’s it.”

Facing her resolve, Great Sage Equaling Heaven closed her eyes. Shiroyasha also silently waited for an answer. Fight, or flight. But Great Sage Equaling Heaven chose -----

“—————OK. Then, I'll go along with you!”

“.....Hah?”

“Not “Hah?” If it's just you and Three Headed Dragon then it'll be boring, so I'll also come along to your paradox game. If anything, you can at least drink tea with me.”

“D.....drink tea? Do you understand the meaning of this?”

“Of course. If you don't want to drink tea do you want me to bring a board game?”

“No no, not in that meaning”

“Actually I recently got this board game that I'm really into”

“Eei, listen when people speak! If your to come with me, it would mean that you would be trapped into horizon of the white night for all eternity! Do you still—————”

“————— Aah. **I don't mind.**”

Facing Great Sage Equaling Heaven's clear eyes, Shiroyasha was at a loss of words.

“Mah..... How do I say this. Its not like I want to abandon Little Garden too. Besides, if things go as they are right now, I won't be able to the task of making you stop and reconsider. In that case, I can only go along with your selfishness.”

One step, Two steps, Three steps, Great Sage Equaling Heaven walked closer.

On the contrary, Shiroyasha took steps backwards. The previous rage filled power evaporated, and she held a complexion of confusion. She was ready to face her grave, but she did not at all expect a fool that would come along with her.

It was not even a grave that held victory or defeat.

Coming along to the place that meant certain death, showed that she had the resolve to commit suicide with her.

“King of the White Night, you took care of both me and my little brother. Just recently you showed the path to Kouryuu.”

“.....That wasn't much of a “taking care””

"That's not all. After five hundred years of imprisonment, the one who directed Xuangzang to me was also on your words right? If that journey didn't happen the me right now wouldn't exist. So, I'll pay that favor back now."

Her right hand reached forward.

Shiroyasha looked at the hand with conflicting emotions on her face.

If she takes this hand there would be no going back.

Even if she had the resolve to sacrifice herself, she did not have the thought of bringing someone with the same resolve. But it couldn't be helped. From when she was born until now, having overwhelming power, Shiroyasha never had to deal with a situation where someone else would try to save her.

Glaring at the hand given to her..... It's not good, shaking her head.

".....Wukong. You have talent. Having a youth with a bright future ahead come is"

"That's not the words of the Maou about to close the bright future of Little Garden."

" No but, at least your tomorrow is guaranteed!"

"Ha, impudent. If I abandon my friends now tomorrow's meals are gonna rot."

Here here, she shaked her right hand as she laughs lightly.....She was re-enlightened. This woman would use the same methods to get along with other gods and Maous. Her will to fight tucked away, Shiroyasha took a large sigh and stubbornly argued. She reinstated the strength in her gaze.

".....I know you are not jesting. If I take this hand, you would really follow me with your warmhearted nature."

"Of course. A rendez-vous for two in the horizon of the white night"

"Don't joke about it! -----Listen, Great Sage Equaling Heaven. You must stay here. And I will head to the lower floors no matter what. If it means the lower floors have no hope at all, hosting a paradox game and make Little Garden a true "World inside a box", closing it, would be the same thing."

The situation on the lower floors have reached a checkmate. Because of this, she has to sacrifice herself.

The glint in Great Sage Equaling Heaven, shot at Shiroyasha who said those words.

“No—————**There's still some hope.**”

As if to reject all opposition, Great Sage Equaling Heaven said these words with great strength.

Because of how much vigor was put saying it, Shiroyasha blinked rapidly and swallowed audibly.

Great Sage Equaling Heaven used her extended hand to grab Shiroyasha's kimono, and dragged her to eye level.

“Shiroyasha. I'll say it again. ——There is some hope. But right now it's a winning percentage close to zero. So I won't force you. You can do a paradox game or whatever. But if you believe in the lower realm———believe the ones you said you loved. Give it a little more time.”

“.....”

To those strong words.

To those inescapable eyes.

To the soul that made her feel hope, Shiroyasha relented and asked.

“Wukong. Do you have a plan of action?”

“I don't. But there are people there who can change the situation.———
—No, *they've come back.*”

This weird way of saying things made Shiroyasha instinctively know what has happened. But before she could utter a word, Great Sage Equaling Heaven spoke as if to cap everything.

“Although by a secret route, me and the Heavenly Army have asked individual communities for reinforcements. If it's them, they'd probably give a hand. In that case, we need to deal with the problem in the Heavenly Realm. As long as Aži Dakāha is not defeated, you're going to be targeted as the holder of many Sun Authorities. First, let's hide.”

“But even if we are to hide, where? The bells I wear are used as a leash. So long as I am in the Heavenly realm, my whereabouts will be found.”

“I've prepared the Amano-Iwato^[11] If it's there, no one would find you.”

“Y, you are extremely well prepared. But what about you? Were not your orders to capture me”

“Not really? All I was told by Sidd***** -sama was “You mustn't let Shiroyasha descend to the lower realms”, so it's fine, right?”

She said as a matter of fact. She really had guts.

But if what Great Sage Equaling Heavens [said] was true, there might be glimmer of hope left for the lower realms. Shiroyasha looked up at the Touriten with a complex expression, and spread her thoughts toward the ones fighting in the lower floors. Although she showed signs of hesitation, she made her resolve and nodded back.

Chapter 1

Fueled by the night wind the forest was burning relentlessly. On the highway leading away from Kouen City, refugees scrambled for safety without any resemblance of order. Nevertheless the royal guards of Salamandra tried their best to advance the evacuation. However, they were still unaware.

The Astral Gate, their only possible escape route, was already destroyed by the Demon Lord Maxwell. If that fact were to spread around, the chaos caused by the refugees would lead to a situation beyond repair.

At the very end of that chaotic line.

Kasukabe Yō, who was tasked with the duty of a rear guard, gritted her teeth in anger and stared at the assaulting Maxwell.

(That was the worst possible move for us.....! With the Astral Gate destroyed, there is nowhere to run....!)

However, that wasn't the only bad thing that happened.

She desperately tried to force her lower body to move and get up, but her legs showed no signs of moving. Every time she breathed in, her lungs were assailed by a squeezing sensation, and also the tip of her fingers and tongue became numb.

She remembered these sensations. Most likely her body was returning to the state before she received the Genome Tree from her father.

(What should I do!!? If I become unable to fight, there is no one else.....)

The Great Garuda

By imitating one from the strongest class of Divine Birds, Kasukabe Yō was able to use its form's overwhelming offensive power to destroy the offshoot of Aži Dakāha. However, as if by compensation, her body reverted back to the time when she was still sickly and weak. With this, her combat ability has decreased below not only the level of a Demon Lord, but an ordinary human being too.

Gritting her teeth, Yō looked up to the twin-tailed young girl standing in front of her.

The girl, Willa the Ignis Fatuus, still had hints of childishness yet remaining in her facial features. She took an intimidating posture with both her arms extended sideways to try and protect Yō.

Maxwell looked down on her with eyes certain of victory, fluttered his mantle and extended his hand towards her.

"It is time to decide, my bride. Will you come with me to help the refugees escape, or abandon the refugees and come with me!! Choose whichever you wish!!"

"....ewww....!!!"

Willa was scared to the brink of tears. However she didn't let her will to fight fade.

Now that Kasukabe Yō collapsed, she was the only one that could protect this place. No matter how terrifyingly perverted the opponent was, this time she could not run away.

Willa looked behind herself to the weakening Yō and her eyes twitched. Maxwell was a powerful adversary, barely matched by both Yō and Willa together in their perfect condition. Essential she may be, but it was obvious even to a simple bystander that something happened to Yō's body. The results of Willa fighting alone was easily predictable.

(Even if I fight with Maxwell....I can't help everyone escape.....!)

She started shivering and getting paler and paler.

With her power to transcend the boundary between life and death she can't teleport people or any living things. Or rather, to be precise it's possible to teleport someone, but since she doesn't have enough power to keep the gate open, she can't guarantee their survival. The only ones able to traverse the gate between life and death and live are divine spirits above the god of death level.

On the other hand Maxwell's teleportation jumps between two points in the same material plane. For the purpose of summoning a large group of giants instantly, that ability is far the best suited.

He could evacuate the refugees without needing to use the now destroyed Astral Gate. But for that..... Willa needed to give her body up to that Stalker. Even thinking about that was dreadful for her, her body quivered at the thought of it.

(Disgusting.....scary.....but.....!!)

She took out a Gift Card with a blue flame engraved on it, and bit her lip.

Willa had the appearance of a young girl, but she was the leader of her Community.

When she was pressed to decide, even if every single hair on her body was standing up from that frightful negotiation, she had to respond. Moreover, it was also about saving a member of their alliance with the No-names.

There was more than enough reason for her to steel her resolve.

".....Maxwell. If I come with you will you really.... everyone"

"Now, Alma!!"

Yō and Willa suddenly raised their heads.

In that instant, a bolt of lightning sprung forward.

From the shade of the forest, a bolt of lightning sprung forward expanding the atmosphere from the frictional heat, accompanied by a thundering roar. The lightning fast strike targeted the floating Maxwell and rushed towards him in a straight line.

The strike caught him entirely by surprise. Without giving enough time to even change the direction of his gaze, Maxwell, who was already drunk on victory, had his side gouged by Almathea's horns.

However Almathea didn't hold off on her next attack.

"It was a clean hit...! Master, the follow up!"

"I know that!"

At the same time she shouted that response, she pulled out three gemstones from her wine-red Gift Card.

Asuka brandished her flute, and with that, the gemstones have been granted pseudo-divinity, which heightened their firepower to the maximum. The gemstones became an orb of light that shred Maxwell's limbs and penetrated his body. His whole right side and left lower body was obliterated by their attack; however, that was not yet the end of the follow-up.

Contained within the pelt of the divine beast was a dazzling bolt of lightning.

The divine bolt of lightning that rivaled the Thunder of the God of the Sky begin to disintegrate the opponent on the molecular level.

Maxwell was hit by a lightning that erased even the rain of blood in an instant, however he only looked down on them like he was seeing insects and emotionlessly declared.

"....with such a low level of heat, do you think you could contain the heat of my love?"

"No way.....!!"

Maxwell's body was without a doubt vaporized by the same flames of pseudo-divinity that destroyed the twin-headed dragons. In spite of that, his body started to repair itself in an instant by gathering up the mist.

It was a strike that should have obviously ended his life. However Maxwell looked like he was only hit by a cool breeze as he moved his empty gaze towards Asuka. That wasn't him just acting though at all.

Even as the divine bolt of lightning was coursing through his body he still didn't feel pain from it.

"This, Master, please hold on to me! I will put some distance between us for now."

Almatheia, who sensed the danger, kicked Maxwell away with her hooves and disengaged. Even during that time, Maxwell was repairing his damaged body and after a few seconds, he was fully restored.

This was different from the powers of recovery of a Divine Spirit, or even Kouryuu's ultra-endurance. Almatheia shook her horns with which she ran Maxwell through before, and started to ponder the mystery of Maxwell's body.

Maxwell's Demon's Spiritual power was created based on a scientific thought experiment pointing out a contradiction in the second law of thermodynamics.

We assume the existence of a being "X" that is able to observe the movement of individual molecules. Then that "X" will be a being capable of isolating positive and negative molecules to distinct parts of space, creating a temperature difference without expending any energy. His space jump is nothing more than a small part of the ability he is using to isolate molecules.

The most terrifying Gift of Maxwell's Demon is its permanency. However Maxwell's Demon's spiritual power was once rescinded, which should've left him as a low-ranking demon that conforms to the second law of thermodynamics. There is no telling how much energy his spiritual power consists of, but the manifested heat that was maximized by the power of the pseudo-divinities was among the highest class of physical phenomenon. However, even after Maxwell was hit by that heat, his spiritual power showed no signs of weakening.

(He has no physical body like a Spirit? No, as a law, a Spirit's spiritual power must be rooted in a physically existing mass or heat source. Therefore, even if he has no physical form, he shouldn't be able to keep his form when hit by an energy that surpasses his spiritual power.)

So that means Maxwell's powers of restoration must be some kind of regeneration ability, masquerading as immortality. If they continue to blast

him directly with Asuka's most powerful attacks, they should be able to kill him in time.

On the other hand, the uninjured Maxwell made a gesture of brushing dust off his mantle; then, like he lost interest, he looked down on them with an emotionless gaze.

"Hhn it looks like not even a Divine Beast could discern my spiritual power. Well, an out of date decrepit god such as yourself could never hope to match a cutting edge Demon Lord like myself."

"..... a youngling who only lived a few hundred years sure can talk. Looks like you gained a bit of a raison d'etre, but in Little Garden, spiritual power not just determines how powerful you are. Do you think you could destroy us, who watched over all of human history, with a pitiful few hundred years worth of spiritual power."

She neighed, puffed and kicked in refusal.

In Little Garden, the longer someone existed, the stronger their spiritual power became. Rather than a Gift it was a basic law that was needed so Little Garden could exist across every time period.

That being said, with all those chronologies existing in the same time, investigating the ancestry of those cultures will certainly yield some kind of discrepancy in the order of events.

If two different entities clashed and the older one ceased to exist, then that could cause the collapse of the entire history of the outside world.

To guard against such a substantial paradox, both on the small and large scale, one of the countermeasures was the Gift of "the longer a spiritual being lived it gained more power".

Even if an older being did cease to exist after all, in exceptional cases re-summoning, or in other words revival, could be performed. Whether the re-summoned would be the person who ceased to exist, or someone else with a different potential, would depend entirely on the whims of the person who performed the re-summoning.

"Maxwell. Your immortality is not caused by Little Garden's Backup System. Learning that was plenty valuable. If we decipher the method of killing you, all it will take is a single strike to erase your spiritual power. Am I wrong, Maxwell's Paradox?"

There is nothing simpler than killing a Demon Lord whose weakness is known.

Between Asuka's Gift and Maxwell's spiritual power, Asuka most definitely had the upper hand. However, as a denial of her train of thought, Maxwell was trying to hold back a sneer.

"Kuku..... that's why you are a decrepit god, you uneducated bitch"

"-what?"

"Don't think that your group of gods will always remain the victors. At the least, there will be no place left for you to exist in the new age created by the Demon Lord Alliance!"

Maxwell widened both his eyes, spread his arms, and materialized a massive blizzard covering the area.

Asuka and the others feared that he wanted to eliminate everyone including the refugees, but that man's cruelty far exceeded their expectations.

"Summon, "Phrase Gate"^[1] – From Hell's Furnace, come forth! Heralds of the Three Headed Dragon!"

"What did you just say!?", screamed Asuka while holding down her hair in the middle of the blizzard.

However her scream was drown out by further wails.

The field of vision was very low, but outside the massive blizzard a tremor-like trampling of feet could be heard.

And not just one or two pairs.

The tremors could be heard from every direction, many dozen sounds overlapping and heading towards the refugees. From the menacing presence that each and every one gave off, the weakened Yō's expression became paler and paler.

"Aži Dakāha's offshoots.....!? That's bad, if they attack now we are all dead!"

"Maxwell, stop! I will fulfill your demands, just help Yō and the others escape!"

Pleaded Willa with a sorrowful voice.

She looked up at Maxwell with dread in her eyes.

Maxwell looked down on her, with an affectionate smile appearing on his face, and said.

"Not good enough"

"....huh?"

"I was just thinking about it a bit more calmly. Your attitude is a bit too callous. Well, I understand that's just another way you express your love for

me. Humans have a word for this, tsundere, right? Even I know about it. If I'm not mistaken it's an expression of love where someone shows a defiant attitude, but even if they get hit, deep down they are crazy about the man and want to be dominated by him. That's not too bad either....., but I would like a more direct and straightforward expression of love."

—My bride will certainly understand without the need to explain it, right?

Maxwell was speaking like they were in relationship where words are not needed anymore. In a nonchalant voice he requested those words he wanted to hear the most, like it was from a spouse that says it every day.

"Once moreeee, Willa! Let me hear it once more, my bride. The words of your vow. As my partner, speak softly of your eternal love for me! With your hands together, like a prayer to God, say your oath Willa the Ignis Fatuus!!!"

Biku, her body winced in pain.

The intimidated Willa went paler and her eyes started to water as she started to kneel. She was well aware of the madness of the intoxicated Maxwell, but he was even more of a threat this time. The usual facade of a gentlemen was gone and he spoke with a frenzied tone and was approaching Willa with bloodshot eyes.

One reason for that was the fact that he was certain of his victory, but this was also his true nature. He would subdue and force to kneel even the target of his devotion and interpret any irksome words and actions as he saw fit.

He didn't need the consent of the other party to fulfill his desire. Something like that should not come between them.

A dictator, where everyone around him is only a servant.

That is the true nature of the Demon Lord Maxwell.

"....this guy, really is the worst...!"

Asuka was listening to their exchange while gritting her teeth.

As a woman, the words and actions of Maxwell were more than enough to be furious about, but she also wasn't foolish enough to not understand the situation.

Smoke was coming up on the other end of the main road. A sudden sound of explosion and Willa and Maxwell's exchange.

'The Astral Gate was destroyed', it didn't take that much time for Asuka to reach that conclusion.

(*I can't let this bastard have Willa-san, but!!*)

She side-glanced towards Yō. In this situation, it wouldn't have been strange for the caring Yō to have launched a suicide attack already. And yet, both her legs looked abnormally weak and showed no signs of moving. Something must have happened to her too, realized Asuka immediately.

(*Aži Dakāha is of course unnerving, but I worry about Kuro Usagi, Pest and the others too. Are those two not here.....?*)

She looked for Kuro Usagi and the others in the massive blizzard.

Kuro Usagi was entrusted to the palace guard of Salamandra, but now that the twin-headed dragons attacked in force, it's more dangerous to be apart.

As the situation grew more and more complicated, Willa started to say her oath quietly.

"In-..... In health and sickness,"

"Louder, Once MORE!!!"

"I-I'm sorry.....!"

She put her hands together in front her ample breasts, but her frightened childlike face was covered in tears, and the words of her vow that she desperately managed to vocalize sounded hollow.

Anxiety, terror, and sadness drove Willa into a corner and left her in confusion.

Maxwell got irritated by Willa's never-ending indecisiveness, clicked his tongue and swung his right hand.

"Dear oh dear, a troublesome bride you are. It seems you can't make up your mind without some sacrifices."

His thrown out right hand swayed and shimmered from heat. A shadow appeared in the blizzard, slowly and steadily started to resemble the shape of a human being, then suddenly grew to have the mass of a single person.

Everyone's expression froze when they saw the person that appeared in the shadow with a shimmer of hot air.

"Ku.....Kuro Usagi!?", cried out Asuka with agitation.

Kuro Usagi should've evacuated with Pest already, but to Maxwell, who could freely use the Space Jump ability, that distance was virtually non-existent.

The perplexed Kuro Usagi blinked twice, realized that she is being held by Maxwell in his arms, and understood the predicament she was in.

"Ma-Maxwell.....!!? Asuka-san and Yō-san as well!"

"Welcome, Moonchild-dono. Please forgive me for calling on you in such a situation."

With a courteous smile Maxwell restrained Kuro Usagi.

Asuka already learned to sense the danger behind that crazed expression, and realized that this isn't the time to be contemplating the situation. She had to make a move now — or Kuro Usagi's life was in danger.

"Alma, go!!!"

"B-but Master!"

"Just do it, fast!!!"

Since there wasn't any time to lose, Asuka shouted those words while she took out Hamelin's Windcutter Flute from her Gift Card. Since the situation was what it was Alma hesitated a bit, but she couldn't disobey her Master either. Alma turned her whole body into lightning and started galloping, kicking the ground firmly with her hooves.

Tracks of lightning extended from the ground in a spiral.

Due to the power of the three pseudo-divinity, Almatheia became the Lightning of the Heavens, and started closing in on the Demon Lord Maxwell emanating even more heat than before. Thunderbolts roared in the thermally expanded air and shook the veil of darkness. The torrent of power comparable to the power of Vajra will most probably burn away the whole area, leaving only the scorched earth in its wake.

If they fight, then it has to be a one-hit kill. With that resolve, Alma unleashed all the spirit power that was bestowed upon her, and from the impregnable fortress she transformed into a single bolt of thunder.

"Demon Lord Maxwell, prepare yourself!"

A hit too fast for eyes to see. Avoiding Kuro Usagi, the target was a single point on the cranium. An attack with all the most powerful Gifts Kudou Asuka could prepare —

Pachin! With a soft noise it was all nullified.

"!?"

Alma's power suddenly disappeared with no warning. After losing her divine powers she tried to complete the attack using her momentum anyway, however she was easily dodged, and with the same speed, she broke through the forest and tumbled across the ground.

"Ma-Master! Are you all right?!"

Alma ended up landing with rolling around unsightly, but thinking about her Master's safety she got up immediately. That was the time she finally noticed that something is not right.

Her frail and delicate Master who was clinging to her back — Kudou Asuka was nowhere to be seen. Thinking she must have fell off, Alma immediately looked around the area, but she wasn't anywhere near.

Asuka disappeared like mist.

The only thing on the ground was Asuka's wine red Gift Card that contained all her Gifts. The terrified Alma looked up at Maxwell and howled.

"N-no you Bastard!! Where is my Master!?"

"Who knows. Anyhow, since it happened so suddenly. Maybe she landed in the sea, or maybe stranded in some mountains. Well, the order was just changed up a little. It really doesn't matter."

Maxwell was really speaking over his shoulder like he doesn't care one bit. However the hopelessness that struck the No-Names was unfathomable.

Kudou Asuka was an incredibly resourceful girl, but her body was no different from a normal human's. She was accompanied by such powerful Gifts like the Sacred Rare-Metal Giant and Adamantite Divine Beast, but alone her power is not that great.

And she was cast out to the vast Little Garden in a situation exactly like that. A sure-win method that is very much like exile.

"Wha.....what did you do....!!!", said Kuro Usagi in a trembling voice and stared at Maxwell.

She never felt this downhearted about her powerlessness. If she was in her best condition right now, she would've already drove the Spear of Certain Victory into him.

With all her might, she tried to put up resistance against Maxwell's arm, but her physical ability is decreased to the level of an ordinary girl. No matter how much strength she puts into it, the restraints won't ever come loose.

Now that it has come to this, she looked down towards Yō and Willa and pleaded with them.

"Yō-san! Willa-san! Please don't mind Kuro Usagi and defeat this scoundrel! With two of you together, surely— !!!"

"Noisy child."

Patan, the sound of finger snapping. And with that Kuro Usagi was suddenly gone. She hasn't even left an afterimage, as if spirited away, she just suddenly vanished.

No need to explain what just happened.

Just the same, Kuro Usagi was also cast out to the vast Little Garden.

As a normal, powerless girl, who lost all her spirit power.

"Ma-Maxwell!!"

"It's a shame I had to do that. This is also your fault, Willa. If only you would've responded faster, it wouldn't have come to this."

Talk about blaming someone else for your own faults. However Maxwell was honestly thinking like that.

When that demonic hand started nearing Yō, the shaking Willa stood in front of her.

"S-stop.....! I-I will do as you say, so !!!"

"Willa.....!"

Willa knew Yō's condition was bad, so she gathered every bit of her courage and defended her.

On the other hand Yō could only lay on the ground and watch as the events unfolded.

She hasn't even regained the feeling in her non-functioning legs yet.

Not only she lost her battle prowess, but her healthy body as well.

Her first friends, the proofs of those friendships, the Gifts all the treasures she supposed to have gained, everything was falling out of her grasp before she could even think about it.

The single memento that she still had of her father, the Genome Tree, at the moment was nothing more than a simple wooden carving.

(Shit....shit, shit!!! Why can't I move my legs in such a crucial time.....)

She felt the harshness of reality crawl up her non-moving legs. Strength wasn't the only thing she lost. Her important friends. The times she would spend with those comrades, who were just like family to her. Everything she wished for was disappearing before her, like a single night's fleeting dream.

She almost wanted to cry.

Her cheeks slowly got wet from frustration.

Seeing her glittering cheeks, Maxwell started laughing so hard his abdominal muscles were shaking.

"Ha.....hahahahaha!!! You cry from frustration from something like losing your comrades! You cry from frustration!!? But the humiliation I received from your father was much more than this!"

"Shut up!!!"

She shouted the loudest she could. Her weakened body started coughing and convulsing in reaction to that.

She hated showing weakness to this vicious man, but what she hated much more was how he said "something like" to losing her comrades, belittling it.

It doesn't matter if the Genome Tree doesn't work.

If her legs would work at least, she would attack him even if that meant death, just to show defiance. However neither of her legs moved, not even an inch, like they were tied down by chains.



That feeling of powerlessness and sadness turned to tears and started falling.

She had no ability to fight, or to show her will to fight back, she was just laying there like a corpse.

Yō bit her flowing tears, wondering if she ever felt so humiliated in her life before as they hit the ground.

"Fufu.....now that this pleasant experience is over, should we go, my bride?"

".... uh.....!"

Seeing the humiliated Yō and the quivering Willa, Maxwell showed an expression that was both ecstatic and furious. From their surroundings, the tremors caused by the twin-headed dragons and the wails of beasts could be heard.

Now that the Astral Gate was destroyed, there was no way to resolve this crisis without the power of Maxwell.

Yō and Almatheia could only grit their teeth and watch in frustration.

They desperately tried to think of a way to do something, but didn't find any.

— With this, the battle of Kouen City was over.

The land had been ravaged, and the pride of their brethren was trampled to the ground.

Yō relaxed her body and let herself lay on the ground, like she had accepted defeat.

— **Even so, get up,** she heard.

A resounding voice echoed in the soul of Kasukabe Yō.

Chapter 2

Part 1

".....huh?"

Whoosh. A single gust of wind blew over her heart that has already accepted defeat.

Yō was lying on the ground, but she suddenly raised her head.

There was no change in her surroundings, the blizzard painted everything pure white. On the other side of the blizzard the twin-headed dragons were still most likely nearing their target, causing loud tremors in the process. However, it was odd. The presence of the twin-headed dragons could be felt this close, yet they still haven't started attacking the refugees.

To Yō, who knew very well how ferocious those twin-headed dragons were, this was clearly unnatural.

As if they were hindered by a giant wall. Just as this thought formed in Yō's mind —

in front of her eyes, Maxwell was attacked by whirling blades of tempest.

"What-!"

"Grraaaarghhh!!!"

Maxwell let out a scream from the shock of the sudden attack. Not having anticipated being on the receiving end of an attack, Maxwell took the blows of the tempest and after a few magnificent spins, impacted the ground.

However that was not the end of it.

Super-condensed maelstroms of wind warped his entire field of view and impacted one after the other. And yet surprisingly, those whirlwinds were launched from so far away, the source could not be seen, moreover all the projectiles hit their target. It was no ordinary ability user.

"Wh-.....who.....!?"

At first everyone thought the twin-headed dragons started attacking.

However Maxwell was attacked by focused flashes of tempest.

Similar, but different to the attacks of the twin-headed dragon before. When the second war cry echoed, only Yō noticed that it wasn't from the twin-headed dragons.

"This voice..... it's not from a twin-headed dragon"

Even with her senses greatly deteriorated, her experiences didn't go away. And that shout was somehow familiar to her.

It sounded heroic, and somewhat nostalgic. When she almost remembered who it belonged to—— Yō turned her gaze upon the radiant objects that were falling from the sky.

"Glowing.....feathers, and parchments?"

Along the glowing feathers, countless parchments were fluttering downward from the sky. Glowing just as brilliantly as the feathers, the parchments were fluttering downward shining brighter than the light from the stars, tearing apart the veil of the night.

"*No, it's not just that!! Look!* ", looking at the sky, Alma yelled in disbelief.

In response, Yō also looked up to the sky and lost her voice from the shock. The panicking refugees were the same. Some rubbed their eyes blood red since they couldn't believe what they saw. The thing that appeared in the sky was so large and out of place. Yō's lips were trembling and she shook her head in disbelief.

"A flying.....castle!!? But, that should be near Underwood.....!?"

Yes. The enormous shadow they were looking at in fright. Yō knew what it really was.

The flying fortress of the vampires that was left floating near Underwood — — the stage of "SUN SYNCHRONOUS ORBIT in VAMPIRE KING", was now floating far above their heads.

"Oi, look at that flag!!", yelled one of the dumbfounded looking Salamandra member while pointing at the flag fluttering on top of the castle. Looking at the flag that came into view, they realized who it belonged to.

"The emblem of Draco Greif!"

"Sala-sama! Did Sala-sama return to Kouen City!?"

"That's not all! The emblems that are standing beside it....can it be....!?"

Golden Garuda. Circling Snake. Twin Goddesses facing each other. Every one of those is an emblem of a super dreadnaught class Community, but the one that really caught their attention was the one that was even more dazzling than those.

A golden rice flower and the sun rising from the horizon. Standing in the center, a goddess', —— no, a Queen's flag.

In the Garden of the Gods, a Demon Lord with a unique title.

At the highest point was fluttering the flag of Little Garden's 3 Digit Community, Queen Halloween.

"It's the Queen! The Queen's flag!"

"The Demon Lord that rivals Shiroyasha?!"

"But to think the Queen,.....that Queen would stand up for Little Garden....!?"

The voice of Mandra from Salamandra, who was in charge of the vanguard, was shaking from the shocking developments.

As more and more mythical beasts from the south side showed themselves, he saw the surprise spreading among the refugees. However that wasn't the only thing that rapidly changed the current situation. The offshoots of the Three-Headed Dragon that didn't show signs of approaching till then, suddenly started closing in on the refugees, howling and baring their fangs at them. Mandra pulled out his sword and yelled.

"The Fire Dragons split into two units and start shooting! Demi-Dragons encircle the refugees and strengthen their guard! Cooperate with those from Draco Greif and take the refugees to the castle!"

"Understood!"

The Fire Dragons counted over 4000 in the beginning, but due to the hurricane that was caused by the Three-Headed Dragon, only around one third remained. Against the Divine Spirit class offshoots, and multiple ones at that, their forces were much too weak, even with their Draco Greif allies.

(The reinforcements shouldn't be just the Queen. I don't know how much reinforcements could Elder Sister gather up, but.....we must at least buy enough time for the refugees to escape.....!)

Having those reinforcements is very reassuring, but it generally takes some time before allied forces can find their pacing together. Depending on the situation, they may have to prepare themselves for an honorable end. When Mandora and the Fire Dragons embraced the possibility of death, the shadows beneath their feet twisted into a weird shape.

"Hey now, hey now. Stop that. You still have your part to play. Don't die in vain."

"Who is that?!"

"That's very rude thing to say. Even with things as they are, I knew you since you were a child. Or you say —— KIHAHAHAHA!!! —— without this kind of laughter you don't even recognize me?!"

The squirming shadow shimmered like hot air, then took the shape of a human.

A top hat and tailcoat. And that vulgar and mean laughter.

Mandra realized who he really was and the blood suddenly drained from his face.

"You...you are.....!!!"

"....Indeed. Leave the evacuation to me. You all focus on defense. The twin-headed dragons are Divine Spirit class, but they've only born recently and not that powerful. Fire Dragons should be able to buy some time. Time to redeem yourself from dishonoring the alliance."

Leaving only those words, the squirming shadow disappeared.

Mandra's blue-ish lips were still trembling as he tightened his grip on the hilt of his sword.

After ordering the fire dragons that were standing by to strengthen their defences, he gazed towards the sky thinking 'the time has finally come'.

(I see..... Finally, they were able to come back....!!)

The question was, who exactly were the ones that made it back. Depending on the answer the progress of battle will greatly change. However predicting that wasn't his task. He readied his stance, and with feelings of relief and just a bit of exaltation dwelling in his chest, he launched an attack on the twin-headed dragons.

The winged mythical beasts of Draco Greif followed as well.

The core of the avian forces were the members of Two Wing, but in the scuffle with Izayoi and the others many of their positions were left vacant. However, they reorganized their ranks around their newest members, the mysterious Greek birds, the Stymphalians. Their feathers were made of bronze and possessed powerful poisonous Gifts. With those they strengthened the defence by creating a protective barrier of poisonous fog that emanated from their mouths. Against the twin-headed dragons it could only slow their movements a bit, but for now it was more than enough.

The other mythical beasts created gusts of wind, so that the poisonous fog wouldn't come into contact with the refugees.

Within those, there was a mythical beast that was especially fast.

The upper body of an eagle and the lower body of a lion. Despite having the body of both the kings of the land and sky, the proud gryphon that

sacrificed his wings for the sake of his comrades, with Sala Doltrake on his back he descended right beside Yō.

"Yō-dono! Thank goodness, are you all right?!"

"Sala? Why are you here?!"

"There is no 'why' about it!! Of course we are here to rescue you!!"

"B-But, we don't have an alliance or anyth-"

"Don't be foolish!! We don't need a reason to save a friend, do we?!"

Her red hair fluttered as Sala answered without a shred of hesitation. On a closer look, sweat was flowing on her forehead like a waterfall. She must have really hurried with the preparations for the battle.

With sweat glistening she dismounted from the back of the gryphon. She was short on breath, panting heavily as her shoulders trembled, her hair looking disheveled. Her messy appearance wasn't something a leader of an army is expected to have.

However she didn't care about that in the least. Her eyes reflected her feelings of relief.

'We made it in time'

Brandishing the banner with a gryphon on it, Sala strongly declared:

"Yō-dono. We have fought against the Demon Lords side by side. There is no way we wouldn't come to the aid of our brethren in need. ——Isn't that right, Gry-dono?"

The wingless gryphon also agreed with a bestial growl.

Having lost the Gift of the Genome Tree, Yō couldn't comprehend the language of the gryphons, but even without words, she understood what he said.

(.....!)

Her tears almost started to overflow once again, but she held them back with will-power.

The first mythical beast friend she made after coming to Little Garden. Also her first opponent in a Game. It was this gryphon. The Gift she received from him saved her many times.

The sign of friendship with that gryphon was without exaggeration the testament of the path Kasukabe Yō had taken since coming to Little Garden.

Even having lost the power of the gryphon, it didn't negate the time Kasukabe Yō spent living in Little Garden. That is why, that gryphon friend said this.

—*Friend. I have come to save you.*

"Yō-dono. It's still dangerous here. Let's fall back to the castle once with the refugees. Hurry, on to the back of Gry-dono!"

She pulled together the reins and made space for her on the saddle.

Yō wiped away her remaining tears and shook her head before telling them the dangerous situation her comrades are in.

"Sala. Don't mind us, head towards Kouen City instead."

".....? Why?"

"Izayoi is fighting alone. If we also lose him there will be no one to stop the Demon Lord."

She spoke in an exceedingly calm tone. However Sala didn't miss the meaning behind those words. She looked around the surroundings of Yō, confirmed that none of her comrades are anywhere near, and with that, a painful expression appeared on her face.

"I'm sorry. It seems we were a bit too late."

".....no. If you didn't come, I too would've been in very bad situation. But first Izayoi, -"

"No need to worry."

Interrupting Yō's words Sala reassured her, then held her up in her arms.

She then quickly moved her right hand towards the sky and caught a single parchment.

"We didn't arrive late for nothing. Rescue is on its way to him already. The strongest forces we can currently muster."

The ones that hurried there wasn't just the comrades of Draco Greif.

With those words the radiance of the parchment has increased.

Yō knew very well the identity of those shining parchments, and regardless of the dangerous situation she was in, she felt her pulse quicken.

If those shining parchments really belong to the one Yō is thinking of, then there is nothing more reassuring than that.

Sala fearlessly smiled and raised the parchment in her hand, then ——

In that moment. The entire scenery that was reflected in their field of vision has crumbled and the world changed completely.

Part 2

That unusual event even reached Sakamaki Izayoi and Aži Dakāha, who were fighting in the ruined city.

"Wha-.....!!?"

"-----!!!"

Prepared for death, Izayoi has launched an attack on the Three-Headed Dragon Aži Dakāha, but due to the sudden appearance of protrusions from the ground, it was interrupted.

The mountain peak that was destroyed in a crescent shape due to their clash was reorganized as if by human hands, and turned into a paved stoned back alley of a capital.

The protrusions that appeared from the ground slowly changed shape like it was being sculpted. It didn't take long for Izayoi to realize that it was an elegant city adorned by many spire structures.

The grand bridge that crosses a large river which runs across the city.

Spire structures as far as the eye can see.

Moreover the giant clock tower that was so famous, calling it a symbol would be an understatement.

Moved to the top of the giant clock tower that also had a belfry, doubting his own eyes Izayoi quietly said to himself.

"What the hell is going on? That clock tower.... no matter how I look at it, this is London isn't it....!?"

"Yahoho! Exactly! This town filled with spires is non other than my hometown! The place my soul belongs to! The capital of England, London!but sadly just a replica."

A pumpkin head with old rags wiggled into view from the tip of the clock tower.

Izayoi looked up at him, but having sustained serious injuries while fighting battle after battle, he could only lean against the wall and slowly collapse panting heavily. He could more or less tell what happened, but sadly he

didn't have enough blood anymore. The swaying of the bell hanging in the clock tower told of the beginning of a new act in the battle.

On the other hand Izayoi didn't have any shred of strength anymore. Having used up all his remaining strength, Izayoi cynically laughed and spat these words at Jack.

"Shit.....if you planned on butting in.....do it a little sooner, dammit....!!!"



"Yahoho! Really, you are absolutely right! No, this isn't something to laugh away. I am truly sorry about this. When suspending an ongoing Game there are a few penalties, you see this Game Board is also something I asked for from the Guardian Saint, knowing full well that it was something unreasonable."

"....."

"However, thanks to Izayoi-dono buying time for us, we gathered up every bit....yes, every last bit of possible war potential. Your herculean struggle kept hope alive!"

He was swinging his pumpkin head and his old rags were swaying from emotions.

"Please leave the rest to us and rest. Well, don't worry about your injuries either. Leticia-dono said No Names have a Unicorn Horn kept in reserve—"

With a jaunty laugh, Jack put Izayoi — whose sight was getting hazy — on his shoulders.

That was the last moment Izayoi could keep himself conscious.

He had an established reputation of being beyond reason, but there is a limit to everything. The fact that he still remained conscious and retained his life was none other than a miracle. Also, Jack had a whimsical appearance, but his ability was well known to Izayoi. If this pumpkin head told him to leave it to him, then there should be no need for too much concern.

Closing his eyes, Izayoi relaxed his body and let himself lean on the pumpkin head.

Part 3

— Around the same time. The unusual phenomenon was still continuing after the appearance of the spiral structures.

A rumbling in the earth was resounding in the city that sprouted forth from the ground.

".....hn"

The three-headed dragon Aži Dakāha was standing motionlessly in a daunting pose, observing the events as they unfolded. To him, who had the alias of God Killer, this degree of transfiguration of the world was nothing

special. The violent rumbling of the earth was continuing and the sound of large bells could also be heard, but there was no reason to panic.

The victor was clear from the start.

So as a Demon Lord, waiting for the raising of the curtain was the polite thing to do.

".....!"

The three-headed dragon was calmly waiting for the challengers to appear. Two fast moving streaks ran towards his back, aiming to pierce through it. Without showing any intention to turn around, with only the movement of his knees the three-headed dragon jumped up in the air, evading both streaks.

One was the flash of a serpent sword, the other belonged to a blade of shadow.

With the changing of the direction of their blades, the assaulting streaks painted a curve as they followed the jumping three-headed dragon. The slashes latched on to the three-headed dragon like serpents with a sickle shaped pose, ready to pounce.

'Trifling', thought the three-headed dragon as he spread his wings, intending to deflect them promptly.

However with one of his three heads he noticed an attacker above him in the air. Recognizing the ground-air pincer attack, the three-headed dragon, instead of deflecting them, he turned his body so the attacks collided with each other.

"Eey, it was noticed."

Jumping down from overhead was a man wearing an eyepatch —— The One Who Envelops the Seas, Kouryuu magnificently clicked his tongue after the failure of the ground-air pincer attack. Fuming with a bogus sounding accent, he deflected the attacks with two clubs he had prepared. But that was not the end of it.

While falling, Kouryuu changed his trajectory by using the wall of a spiral structure as a foothold.

Kicking away the screeching spiral structure, he challenged the three-headed dragon.

"Prepare yourself, three-headed dragon!"

With giant clubs in both of his hands, he aimed for the base of the three-headed dragon's left-most head.

The strike with a thousand years of training in an underwater volcano behind it had the same power as a solar flare erupting from the surface of a star. As the blow that overwhelmed even Izayoi was closing in, it produced shockwaves that created ripples in the atmosphere,

".....*laughable*"

and impacted at the base of the three-headed dragon's head.

However the body of the three-headed dragon didn't even budge.

Just the opposite, the club that struck him was the one that blew to smithereens. Thanks to the force of impact that was transmitted through the club to his hand, Kouryuu learned of the power that dwells in the body of the three-headed dragon.

(*This bastard....! The amount of mass within his body is no joke.....!!!*)

But at the same time, Kouryuu understood the Gift that Aži Dakāha possessed.

(*To create all those powerful offshoots he had share his own spiritual power with them for sure.....!!! Then if we turn that around and use that against him....!*)

For years he lived so peacefully that others called him a 'drifting deadwood' as a tease, but his combat experience is enormous. The title of a veteran forged by many battles wasn't just for show. If there was a decisive difference between Izayoi and Kouryuu, it was none other than the difference in experience.

Working on a strategy as he was falling, Kouryuu jumped away as soon as he landed as a way to gain some distance. But the three-headed dragon wasn't good natured enough to let him easily get away.

Spreading his wings, the three-headed dragon flew towards Kouryuu, showing no regard for inertia.

With an extraordinary speed at that. Even with the eye of Kouryuu, who trained and polished his body to the limit for a thousand years both at the sea and in the mountains, it can only be described as godly speed.

Koryuu launched another attack from a slightly unbalanced position targeting the three-headed dragon's eyes as he felt the cold sweat running down his back.

The three-headed dragon skillfully avoided that strike with his long snake-like heads and instead bared his fangs and tore the club to smithereens. It was a weapon that was made of Sacred Steel from the Age of Gods, but before the fangs of the evil god that were said to be able to swallow the earth, it was the same as trash.

The instant that the three-headed dragon's giant pure white arm was raised —— Kouryuu shouted with a smile on his face.

"Now, burn him away!!!"

When the three-headed dragon was right on him, suddenly a heat wave capable of scorching the ground was born. The radiant feathers that were falling alongside the parchments turned into heat all at once creating a golden storm, and assaulted the three-headed dragon.

The three-headed dragon was surrounded from every direction. However to his body, that was far stronger than steel, a heat wave of this degree was no different than gentle breeze. The three-headed dragon didn't give up his pursuit.

However the moment those glowing feathers touched his body, he realized that it was an error in judgement.

From his pure white body that can easily brush aside even a solar flare, there was a smell of burnt flesh coming.

It wasn't something that could be called a wound, but it was the first time the three-headed dragon felt slightly surprised about something thus far. There was no precedent for his body being injured from any kind of heat yet.

Zoroastrianism is religion where fire is regarded as an object of worship.

Good gods of course, but an evil god such as the three-headed dragon was also under its protection. Divine spirits like his offshoots are one thing, but a flame that would be effective against a Divine Spirit of the strongest species ——

".....no. There was one."

The three-headed dragon that was surrounded from every direction abandoned his pursuit and soared straight upwards where the density of the flames were the smallest. Swinging his wicked claws the three-headed dragon tore through the flames, then started hovering in front of the clock tower and examined his surroundings.

Spiral structures and a river that flowed through the city. Also a great bridge above that.

The clock tower symbolizing the city of London.

Someone unknown summoned a scenery that imitates London, the capital of England.

Seeing such a symbol as the clock tower, the three-headed dragon reached out and touched the tower still hovering in place.

(The exterior is still new. I'd say it's less than 30 years since it was built.)

The clock tower of London was completed around 1860.

Therefore the summoner of this city is someone from within 30 years of that time. —— So it's restricted to a Host that is somehow related to London within the interval of 1860 ~ 1890.

However due to the Paradigm Shift, a few years of discrepancy could arise.

Because of that, only the general focus point is known, but it's more than enough in this case. All of English history would be a bit too wide, but if it's only limited to London, then the identification isn't too hard.

And the other thing. The three-headed dragon raised its sickle shaped head and looked up into the sky.

—— The flaming feathers glowing with a golden light.

Flames that could hurt the body of a natural born Divine Spirit are close to none. And also with it being in the form of golden feathers, there is only one that fits the description.

They brought someone with this much power. There should be more than one or two instigators.

The three-headed dragon once again looked over the city, and with his three heads he howled at the Hosts.

"Phun..... it's about time you show yourselves!! Trying to take vengeance while hiding in the shadows is the method of a troglodyte!! If you are heroes aiming to take the head of a Demon Lord, then at least show yourselves and say something!!!"

The spiral structures were creaking from the roar that could shake heaven and earth.

Waves formed on the surface of the river and the London Bridge has almost fell down, like in the song.

The moment the giant roar, that also changed the flow of the clouds, reverberated and died down.

Brilliantly fluttering golden hair appeared in the corner of the three-headed dragon's field of view.

"200 years ago you showed no signs of wanting to engage in a conversation, you've become quite talkative. Was living underground that boring?"

Her flowing hair was so beautiful it could easily be mistaken for golden threads. However the outfit she was wearing was different from the usual.

The Lord of Vampires wearing a mantle over a jet black knight's armor —— Leticia Draculea had a dramatically different ambiance filled with pressure that was unthinkable from her usual gentle attitude as she was glaring at the three-headed dragon with a ghastly expression. Her eyes reflected her wrath.

To rebuke her, a masked knight wearing a silver dress armor raised her voice.

"Leticia. It's not like you to give in to a provocation. The plan was to observe the battle a bit more"

"Nah nah, Leticia-chan is right. If we didn't come out now, he would've blown the city away to drag us out."

"Yahoho! I would like him to refrain from doing that! Having the stage blown away before the curtain call would be a disgrace for me as the Host."

Queen's Knight, Faceless.

The One Who Envelops the Seas, Saurian Demon King.

Pumpkin the Clown, Jack o' Lantern.

Following after Leticia, the three of them showed themselves by jumping on the roof of the spiral structures.

However that wasn't the end of it.

The radiance of the feathers falling from the Heavens noticeably increased.

The feathers that held overwhelming divinity started swirling gradually increasing their density. Even the three-headed dragon could not help but be on his guard against this opponent.

"—— Sworn brother, and the others too, leave the small talk at that. The Demon Lord wishes for verbal exchange. In that case, as Hosts, manners dictate that we respond appropriately."

With an alluring attitude and fluttering elegant garments, a woman appeared flapping her wings made of golden flames. Her manner of

speaking and the glint in her eyes were both emanating an air of dignity, with one look anyone could recognize her as a ruler.

In Indian Mythology, she was born from the wish for 'a king that equals Indra', as a natural born Divine Spirit that was said to devour evil dragons.

A Divine Bird possessing Anti-Divine and Anti-Dragon Gifts —— The Garuda Princess, Roc Demon King.

"This is the first time we have met, Demon Dragon of Zoroastrianism. I'm a child of the Garuda Heaven, The One Who Leaves Heaven in Disarray, Roc Demon King. I'm but a demigod, but because of the bond with my unreliable sworn brother I am now standing before your lordship. —— *It won't be long*, but pleased to make your acquaintance."

With graceful manners the Roc Demon King bowed.

With every one of her movements she radiated glamourous beauty, but her composed gaze was a reminder of her long military history. She locked her sharp bird-of-prey like eyes on the three-headed dragon and emanated a fighting spirit that signaled her desire to begin her assault.

Below the fighting spirit emanating woman, Saurian Demon King casually chuckled.

"The opponent is not just Karyou-chan. Even when talking about the strongest '*God Killer*', if the opponents are not Gods, then I thought it should be no different from someone of the strongest species. So while the young man fought with his life on the line, we gathered many kind of war assets."

Saurian Demon King said it in an aloof manner. However in reality it wasn't as easy as he said.

When Kouryuu got caught up in the tornados caused by the three-headed dragon, he realized the degree of danger posed by the enemy, then he left the three-headed dragon to Izayoi and went to the Roc Demon King to ask for assistance.

Similar to the Saurian Demon King, Jack also visited the Guardian Saint.

To avoid pointless bloodshed he asked for his Host Master powers to be raised. The reason the Game was interrupted was because the Penalty and the Game were reset.

They were supposed to come back immediately, but Demon Lord Maxwell destroyed the Astral Gate so they fell into a situation where they couldn't return even if they wanted to. If an unexpected reinforcement didn't appear

at that time, both the Saurian Demon King and Jack probably couldn't have returned.

"Yohoho..... we kept you waiting for a long time. Well then, we should proceed with the raising of the curtain soon."

"Ya, that's right. It's a bit said to have only one participant, but that shouldn't matter. We can increase the audience as much as we want anyway."

"Indeed. We can't keep him waiting until Sala-dono arrives. —— Are you ready, Roc Demon King-dono?"

"Yes. This Great Demon Lord probably won't complain about the handicap of many against one."

With a gesture of hiding her mouth, Roc Demon King also elegantly chuckled.

That composure. That pride. That arrogance was looked down upon by the three-headed dragon's six eyes ——

"....ah. I don't mind."

"What?"

Due to the emotionless response, Roc Demon King reflexively asked back. The three-headed dragon cracked his necks, flashed his six ruby eyes and sneered at them.

"I don't mind, I said. The existence of a Demon Lord is already something intolerable. In other words it's none other than an existence that is an enemy to everything in this world. —— Many against one? HA. don't make me laugh!! How can you call yourself a Demon Lord without destroying an army by yourself!!"

The Demon Lord howled in high spirits, radiating the dignity of a king. That overwhelming presence erased the conceit of the battle-hardened warriors, not allowing even a shred of arrogance. Everyone gulped and their chest was filled with the premonition of the oncoming mortal combat.

The spiritual power of Saurian Demon King, Jack, Leticia, and Roc Demon King swelled at once.

Every single one of them was a mighty warrior already, but the current expansion of their spiritual power couldn't even be compared to their usual. The stage that was based on London shook from the ground up causing the bell in the great belfry to chime.

"I see.....that means no mercy then!!! Let's begin, Last Embryo —— !!!"

Everyone took a parchment radiating different colors into their hands.

The three-headed dragon dropped his waist, positioned his four limbs on the ground and took a posture like a beast.

The moment the sound from the bell of the great belfry echoed through the whole city —— the four of them announced the raising of the curtain at the same time.

Part 4

Going back in time a bit.

After Maxwell was sent flying by the mysterious attack, he wasn't invited to the stage of London, so he was thrown into the mountain range.

His mantle was tattered and his graceful face was covered in blood. It was an injury that was easily repairable with his power, but the current Maxwell didn't have even a shred of mental stability for that.

He was assaulted by maelstroms of wind, vortexes of power resembling tempests, that were condensed to their utmost limit. Compared to this one strike, the winds used by a gryphon or Kasukabe Yō were not even a gentle breeze.

Maxwell had a recollection of this power that can be aptly described as a devastating tempest fast as lightning.

(*Can't be that man has.....?*)

Three years prior —— The one that thoroughly beat him down after he triumphantly arrived in Little Garden to get his bride. He received the same attack then also. After being interfered in the same way twice, Maxwell went beyond anger and was laying on the face of a rock in a daze.

Remembering it now still caused his hairs to stand on their end. That single strike shattered the pride of Maxwell, who came to Little Garden as a new up-and-coming Demon Lord, and injured him to a degree, that he had to avoid meeting Willa for three years. If the opponent that humiliated him that time once again showed himself before him, then ——

"What a.....What a, stroke of luck!!!"

With the expression of a madman, Maxwell casually stood up, brushing his hair backwards.

He desperately waited for the day when he could clear away his disgrace. Maxwell's Demon now have grown to have the power of a 4 digit Demon Lord.

Revenge is sweet as honey in every era. A sweet temptation that doesn't exceed or fall behind his desire to take possession of his bride by force.

The only reason Maxwell's Demon, who was born as a state-of-the-art Demon Lord, obeyed that Poet was to further his own agenda.

As if to mock his seething self, a young girl's voice could be heard from the thicket.

".....really, I can't believe it. To think you would destroy the Astral Gate, that's a taboo even for Demon Lords. I underestimated the enthusiasm of an up-and-coming Stalker a bit."

Playing with her glossy long hair, the young girl quietly said with a dumbfounded tone. She was only lightly dressed in a sleeveless upperwear and mini skirt, but despite the cold night, she was as cheerful as always.

"Oh, if it isn't Maker-dono. Excellent timing. I will now be heading to intercept *that* man. I'm sorry, but could you bring Willa over in my stead?"

Hearing Maxwell's request she —— Rin was standing there looking speechless as she nodded deeply as if confirming something.

"Hm, how do I say this. To tell the truth, I went and kidnapped Willa-san even without Maxwell-san's request."

—— Ha? Maxwell let out a dumbstruck voice.

However Rin ignored Maxwell's behaviour and abruptly spun around. She turned to face the Jin Russel and Pest duo, who were standing in the back.

"Let's see, let's see. It really didn't go according to the plan, but the refugees should be all right for the time being? With this it should be fine to consider the ceasefire agreement in effect, right Jin-kun? And also Pest-chan."

Jin's body stiffened as he nervously shook his head sideways, as Willa stood there confused and half crying, not knowing what's what anymore.



"Not yet. A crucial point is not yet fulfilled."

"That's right. We even helped restrain Willa. If we don't get the biggest reward, then it wouldn't have been worth the effort."

Pest was standing beside Willa, whose arms were both bound by chains, and answered without any malice or courtesy. Willa was approached by Pest in the confusion and was abruptly wrapped in chains, then taken to this place. It's no wonder that she is confused.

Taking a sidelong glance at the current her, Rin nodded with a full face smile.

"Of course, we are keeping that part of the promise also. —— Is everyone ready?"

Saying that she changed the direction of her gaze. Jin wasn't the only one near her.

A jet black western dragon and a magician-looking woman wearing a robe with the hood covering her face.

Also, wearing a pure white uniform with its neck slightly released, a white-haired, yellow-eyed boy —— the one called His Highness was also standing by with his arms folded.

Maxwell didn't understand the meaning behind their words, so he asked them narrowing his eyes with suspicion.

"....what are you talking about, Maker-dono?"

"Oh, isn't that obvious?♪"

With a calm smiling face, Rin pulled out her knife and decreed to Maxwell.

"Maxwell's Paradox. With the authority of a Maker, *I will replace you*. In other words, the Paradigm Shift that appeared in 2120 —— the spiritual power of the Third Perpetual Motion Machine."

Chapter 3

Part 1

---North Side. In an unexplored section of the forest.

Just when Kouryuu and the others activated their Authorities of [Host Master] to host their new Games.

The moonlight that sieved through the gaps of the canopy roused KuroUsagi from her unconsciousness.

“.....?”

“KuroUsagi? That’s great. You have awoken.” Came a familiar voice beside herself.

Turning her head to the side, the relieved face of Kudou Asuka swam into her field of sight.

“Asuka-san..... Where are we.....?”

“..... I don’t know. I think we were both thrown here by Maxwell But I guess I’m lucky enough to be thrown near KuroUsagi. I would definitely be at my wits end with fear if I were to be thrown to this place alone.”

Saying that, Asuka stood up and patted the dust off her tattered formal dress. A closer look would have given away the fact that she had lost a shoe and her hair was messier than the moment before the dimensional dumping. Although she had said that it was near, but KuroUsagi could guess that it might have been quite a distance instead. And KuroUsagi bowed her head as she felt uneasy.

“...really sorry about this. If KuroUsagi did not let herself be caught...”

“Aah, let’s not talk about things that have already past. We are comrades of the same Community, aren’t we? We will have to look out for each other then,” Asuka paid it no mind as she straightened her back to face forward.

“Anyways, we can’t be staying here forever either. Let’s go find a nearby village of sorts. Are you able to stand?”

“No...No problem. But first, I will prepare some shoes.”

KuroUsagi took out her Gift Card and confirmed her inventory of extra clothing while Asuka leaned her back on a withered old trunk, looking up at the stars quietly.

“..... I hope everyone’s okay.”

“.....”

Met with that worried tone, KuroUsagi found it difficult to come up with a response. In the past, she would have given her utmost effort to overcome any obstacle that stood in her way regardless of its difficulty. But after losing her Usagimimi, it felt like her determination had been sapped from her as well.

The loss of her spiritual powers must have caused her to lose her self-confidence as well. But more importantly, she could not get rid of that scene of fresh blood spurting before herself, no matter how hard she tried.

(Izayoi-san.....what could have happened after that.....?)

An unending uneasiness weighted on her heart. But it wasn’t the time to worry about the others.

Were they still in the North Side or were they thrown to the South or East Side?

Not that it changes anything as the forests of Little Garden are inhabited with various eudemons, faeries and evil spirits who roam freely and cause trouble.

Continuing to stay in this location would be dangerous for them.

“Walking around at night will be dangerous. Let’s rest here for the night and continue the next day,” saying so, KuroUsagi began to take out the rations and a water tree branch from her Gift Card. And it was then that Asuka realised her blunder.

“..... Oh, no. How? I think I might have lost my Gift Card.”

“It’s, It’s okay! There’s still a few days of ration stored in KuroUsagi’s card! If we find a river and follow it downstream, we will eventually find a Community and its village!”

KuroUsagi waved her hands to get Asuka to cheer up. And seeing KuroUsagi’s effort to brighten the situation, Asuka gave a bitter smile in return. Although it was a serious blunder on her part, she could not afford to beat herself down at this point. After all, it wasn’t only herself who was in this desperate situation.

The duo prayed to the stars for the safety of their comrades as they arranged their equipment in preparation to pass a night in the forest.

Part 2

[<<Gift Game Name: Jack the Monster>>

Participating Requirements:: A person who have killed or hurt a child before;: A person who used children to perform evil deeds.:

Participant: Demon Lord of Confusion (Permitted to kill anyone who obstructs the Game): Game Leader: Jack the Ripper:

Winning Conditions::

- Defeat the Host- [Pumpkin the Crown];
- Unravel the mystery behind 'Jack' by understanding the historical events.

Defeat Conditions::

- Participant(Player) is killed by the Game Leader and is hence defeated;
- Whenever a part of the Game Leader's true identity is exposed, the Participant(Game Leader) will lose his strength to the point of defeat.

Oath: The legality of this Trial is assured as long as it is implemented on a participant who has fulfilled the Participating Requirements.

"[St. Peter] Stamp"] ¹¹

[[< --Gift Game: "GREEK MYTHS of GRIFFIN"-- >

Participating requirements

-The target have to be an invader (The definition of an invader will follow the conditions that were created in the contract)

Winning conditions

Fulfil either:

Defeat the [Protector of the Treasure] from the Host side. Discover the location of the treasure and display your courage. Defeat conditions

Fulfil either:

Destroy the treasure (In the case that the host destroys the treasure on purpose, it will be counted as a win for the participating side). In the case that all those on the Participating Side are defeated and unable to battle. Punishment conditions

Either:

Participants are not allowed to battle the Hosting Side beyond the "Perimeter of the Treasure grounds". In the case that the Participant Side breaks the rules, the Host Side is allowed to seal any but only 1 of the Gifts possessed by the Participant. In the case that the Participant breaks the rule thrice, it is possible to enforce an unlimited restriction upon the Participant. The punishment conditions will only release itself when the winning conditions are met. Rewards for winning

Either:

The Participant is allowed to request for any sort of reward from the Host (as long as it is within the boundaries of their spiritual power to give). The Host is allowed to execute the Participant as an invader. Oath: I swear by the righteousness of this trial to be held only in the conditions where the target has met the participating conditions.

The Temporary Representative of the Greek God Faction, [Kerykeion] Stamp]]]

[[<< --Gift Game: GROUND COVER on the MOON SEE-- >>

I have twenty-eight brothers who are very shy.

They will only appear when night befalls us.

My brothers who are similar in appearance hate each other and often bare their fangs and claws to initiate their fights while cursing each other.

Their venomous stare of hostility is powerful enough to resonate with the surface of the sea and it will only disappear when dawn breaks.

The disappearance of two led to the swallowing up of sand.

The disappearance of four led to the swallowing up of rocks.

The disappearance of six led to the crunching of boulders.

The disappearance of eight led to the burying of earth.

The disappearance of ten led to the withering of forests.

The disappearance of twelve will lead to the overturning of mountains and rivers.

When fourteen of us have disappeared, the only ones who exist between the Heavens and the earth will be us.

Lamenting the world as one, I open the heavenly rock cave to recruit new brothers. [2]

The recruitment of two created mountains and rivers.

The recruitment of four revitalised forests into a lush dense greenery.

The recruitment of six gave earth.

The recruitment of eight brought about boulders.

The recruitment of ten accumulated rocks.

The recruitment of twelve led to the flow of sand.

When we have recruited fourteen people, we brothers come together to cast a new curse on each other.

A new dawn will not come even as Heaven and earth are truly separated.

Pass through the formless us and smash the cycle of reincarnation.

"Great Sage of Maelstroms(The one who devastates seas)"Stamp]]

At the same moment that the Game Hosting was announced, an immense pressure weighted down the body of the three headed dragon.

{".....Guh.....!?"}

That impact was heavy enough to wobble its knees.

A Gift that could make the tough body of the three headed dragon bow slightly at its knees with its immense pressure was surely not a normal one. And the three headed dragon quickly connected the immense pressure to be a result of the Game rules.

(Weight manipulation..... I see. The contents of the third Game is the cause, huh?)

Having a vast amount of experience as a God Killer, the three headed Dragon remembered a piece of information that was similar to this Game. Taking the weight manipulation and name of the game into consideration, it probably is a copy of the [Host Master] bestowed to the [Moon Rabbit]s.

And if the guess was spot on, the actual name of the Game would be <Holy Shrine of the Moon Sea (GROUND COVER on the MOON SEA)>.

The three headed dragon speculated that it is probably a game that the [Great Sage of Maelstroms] came up with by connecting the moon cycles to the ebb and flow of the seas.

But time for a deeper analysis was a luxury that the Hosts would not grant to their participant.

Kouryuu tossed aside his broken pole as he shouted, "Do not give him time to unravel the game contents! We must keep up the attacks!!!"

Then stripping off his haori, Kouryuu proceeded to channel energy to his body of steel which was the result of rigorous training. [3]

Possessing a spiritual power cultivated from a thousand years in the mountains and the seas, his punch packed the power to blow out a star in the skies. In addition to his initial powers was the Authority of [Host Master] that expanded upon his spiritual powers to give him increased strength.

Filled with a fighting spirit that was ready to burst like an underwater volcano, Kouryuu lept straight into the spot of the three headed dragon with just a step. Though Kouryuu had the bad habit of collecting weapons, his actual strength lies within his transcendent bare handed martial arts. And upon rushing into his opponent's chest, Kouryuu pivoted on one leg to execute a roundhouse kick to the chest.

Although that was not a speed that the three headed dragon was unable to respond to, the burden of the immense pressure created an opening for Kouryuu to send its giant body flying into the sky.

{"Guh.....!!"} the breath escaped from the three headed dragon as the unexpected impact was landed on him. The execution of the sequence of actions from the leap to the kick was extremely controlled to have no excessive movements. And it focused the energy enough to destroy a star into a single point that landed beautifully on the opponent. It was truly something that could not be achieved through normal training. Even Izayoi with his crazy strength would not be able to do this. And it was evident from the slight vibration from Kouryuu's landing on the street.

(But that isn't just an impact from martial arts. That weight in the impact was far exceeding the earlier impacts. This inflation of the spiritual power..... could it be..... a temporary activated Celestial transcendence.....?!)

Cultivating his spirit for a thousand years on a submarine volcano under the sea, Kouryuu obtained a spiritual power comparable to that of the Sea god and Mother goddess. And though he might have inherited bloodline of the Yellow Dragon in his veins and is bestowed with natural talents from birth, his worth was never acknowledged due to his bastard status. Hence, this is the resultant Gift that he obtained for the sake of proving his worth to himself. And that was the Authority of [Host Master] that would grant him an equivalent power comparable to that of the strongest kind of Celestial being and their associated body attributes while he hosted the Game.

That, was the impact that combined the results of his painstakingly long martial arts training and a Celestial being's body strength.

{"However, you are foolish!"}

A difference in positioning was created by the upward strike on the opponent.

The three headed dragon was now above and Kouryuu was below it. Even with the immense pressure that restricted its movements, the three headed dragon only needed to make a free fall to slice up Kouryuu to shreds.

The wicked blades of the three headed dragon were pulsing with an unlimited energy.

I won't let you succeed. Seeming to think that, Faceless and Leticia followed up from Kouryuu's kick.

"I will bear his attack. Leticia, go for his legs!"

"Okay!"

Zipping from the back of that head of blond hair were the shadow blades which shot outwards.

The shadows that fashioned itself into a dragon's maw continued its transformation to form hundreds of shadow spears that launched themselves towards the right leg of the three headed dragon. But perhaps due to the attack being of the same classification of Gifts, the shadows of the three headed dragon fended off the attack with ease.

In the meantime, Faceless held her two spears to face the three headed dragon's attack. And the three headed dragon swung down its left claw towards his adversaries with the domineering spirit that harboured his intention to rip Kouryuu and Faceless with his vicious swipe.

But for Faceless who's a veteran of sorts, her performance wasn't less spectacular in any way.

"Ha----!!!"



Timing her attacks precisely to match her breathing was her speciality. Although Faceless did not have the strength to match half of that of Izayoi, her refined battle techniques and rapid analysis of the situation more than made up for that shortfall.

That vicious claw which held the power to rend the earth and split seas would only smash through her spears in a direct confrontation and inflict full damage to the intended targets.

Hence, there was a need to avoid that angle of the swing and predict the trajectory of the swipe before placing the two steel spears above that trajectory. Then matching her breaths to time the best opportune moment to perfectly utilise her spear butts on the downward claw swipe to draw it into a circular movement upwards and miss its target.

(Ouwa? This lady is also quite something.....!!!)

Kouryuu, who saw the executed skill up close, gave an exclamation towards that gentle spear technique. And Leticia too had the same reaction for it would be impossible for her to accomplish a similar feat. A martial art that did not allow for a margin (decimal) of error was definitely a skill that was crossing over into the realm of godliness.

If Kouryuu's martial art is at the peak of the brute force, Faceless's martial art would be at the peak of the gentleness.

Having its sure kill strike pushed away by the opponents, the three headed dragon quickly re-evaluated his opponents from the feats that the duo have accomplished. It would seem that they were no mere bugs to be easily swatted away.

And spreading its jet black wings, the three headed dragon planned to pull back from them to take to the skies.

But was engaged by Roc Demon King and Jack who were waiting in the skies.

"Pumpkin! Are you able to expose his weakness?!"

"Yahoho, I won't know until I try--- I will give it a full powered attempt then!!!"

A large amount of hell fire erupted from Jack's pumpkin head and swirled around him, seeming to take on a life of its own. And it was not long after that the tornado of flames fell away to reveal the form of a human.

Wearing a wine red leader jacket and scarf, the murderous killer appeared with blood stained daggers in his hands. With the hell flames continuing to envelop his body, he turned his red murderous stare to his target.

"And next----it's time for [Jack the Ripper]"!!!", he shouted.

The flames were then transformed into springs to buoy himself in midair and to execute high speed manoeuvres in empty space. With regards to his current speed, it was much faster than that of Izayoi or Kouryuu and it was several times faster than the duel with Demon King of Confusion.

And this strengthening was the result of begging his Saint to rearrange the Game settings.

Jack's Authority of [Host Master] wasn't an all-powerful item but it was capable of focusing and strengthening the spiritual power of the individual. Only when everything that can be found in a magical god and demon Game to be hosted by a Demon Lord is included in the settings, can one obtain a body with the ability close to the four-digits.

Of course, there was a price that came along with this power. The difficulty of the Game that Jack currently hosts is lowered to the extreme. And a middle classed Game Controller would have no problem in seeing through the riddle that surrounds Jack's identity with just a glance.

This is because, there is an unfortunate condition of hosting that made it a necessity to provide a large amount of hints for the Participants to break the Game. The London City streets, the reporting of one's name when undergoing the transformation are all part of the Stage that would decrease the difficulty of clearing the Game. It is a common knowledge in Gift Games that "The wicked leaves others in ignorance", but the condition of which Jack's game is set with is one that can be cleared without any prior knowledge if the participant looks into the entire city structure.

With a higher risk, comes the larger increase in one's spiritual power.

For the sake of protecting his Community from falling under the hands of the Demon Lord, he had reset his spiritual status to make a last stand with these conditions in the game.

(Hou.....That sure is impressive. There aren't many people who can move this deftly in a mid-air battle.)

Roc Demon King offered her praise as she followed the battle with squinted eyes.

Jack's aerial battle was truly impressive and it was a high praise coming from the Garuda(Karyou's) race. It was a feat even though the three headed dragon was unable to fly at the speed that it ran on the ground and besides the fact that an immense pressure was now burdening its body.

The astonishing strength compounded to the speediness supplied by the flame springs enabled Jack to execute a flurry of attacks and it would be a difficult task for anyone to catch up or even to bring him down at this point.

And the three headed dragon that wanted to dodge that sequence of chained attacks---

{“Don’t you try getting too smart for yourself!!”}

Extending its wings to their full wing span, it gave a sharp spin to create a tornado with the wind that was caught in its wake.

Moreover, the tornadoes that sprung up were three separate tornadoes and each held the power to devastate a whole city.

The tornadoes swallowed the pointed towers and sucked the rivers dry while carving up the streets. Such a scale of devastating power was already beyond the methods used to deal with a single person.

It was surely the strike of a Demon Lord to wipe out all who dared to bare their fangs against its tyranny.

But in terms of firepower, she was not inferior in any way.

“Golden Wing Flames....!”

Unfurling her wings of golden flames, Roc Demon King charged towards the tornadoes created by the three headed dragon.

With flames that cloaked her entire body, she too transformed into a huge golden winged bird that flew through the three tornadoes in a flash. And the tornadoes dissipated to mere breezes as she swept through them in her flight. Following that, Roc Demon King continued her flight to circle in the skies while cloaked with her Golden Wing Flames. Maintaining the emission of intense heat waves, she awaited the chance to strike the three headed dragon.

At that moment, there was a flash that came from a Serpens Scorpio sword below.

It was Faceless who leaned against a spire of a pointed tower while using her whip sword to snag at the leg of the three headed dragon. Meanwhile, Jack who picked up on the idea noted it to be a good opportunity to transform the flame springs into tools that would restrain the three headed dragon.

“Now, do it!”

The duo shouted at the same time. They could not restrain their target for long and Roc Demon King responded in kind.

The radiance of the golden flames burned with a greater intensity as it became the vessel for the Sun's chariot. And this was a Gift that had proven to be effective against the three headed dragon.

[Great Sage Who Leaves Heaven in Disarray (The one who causes chaos in Heaven)] , Roc Demon King released her spiritual power and took aim at the three headed dragon.

"Release of spiritual locks..... [Vāhana Garua]---!!!" [5]

The atmosphere around her exploded and burned as she soared through the skies in the form of a fiery roc.

And the three headed dragon who was restrained at the moment was to receive a direct impact of this flight. As the strike landed, it was then catapulted backward by the impact and the heat. The heat waves that were released were equivalent to a miniature sun and the vessel of the sun gave off a mirage of seven colours that continuously melted away at the surrounding structures. At the epicentre of this brilliance was Roc Demon King who clenched her teeth in concentration.

(The chance to victory..... is here!)

Giving a barrage of strikes in a breath. It was a commendable act by far to be able to launch a sudden attack and strike down this Demon Lord when it is a seriously difficult task to begin with.

And the only one who could defeat the three headed dragon here was herself. Roc Demon King maintained her Golden feathered form while launching her strikes. Simultaneously using her wings to enclose over the three headed dragon before transforming those golden flaming feathers into an intense light.



The compacted light rays instantly vaporised the surroundings and a pillar of fire rose from the spot together with the sound of a loud explosion. Just the explosion alone was able to deal a large scale devastation that felled all of the sharp roof towers and reduced the streets of London to rubble in a blink of an eye.

The stage was filled with a sea of flames.

The river was being boiled by the waves of heat.

The pillar of fire, which dispersed the clouds from the sky, did not seem to have the intention of dying off.

The group of the Host side except for Jack were hiding out in a film of water created by Kouryuu to escape the blast.

“.....that's really amazing.”

Having witnessed the entirely different level of firepower, Leticia was feeling the pricks of cold sweat as she gave an amazed exclamation.

“After all, Karyou-chan is the one with the biggest firepower among the seven of us. Even from before, she had always been the main force to annihilate most if not all of our enemies.”

“Although I get that she's a demigod, but I guess this is mainly due to her bloodline of the strongest species, huh. If that is so, that big Demon Lord should not be left unscathed after that attack too.”

“So, what are we doing next?”

Kouryuu interrupted Leticia's babbling. There seemed to be an anxious look to his eyes. And before she could ask for the reason to that, Jack had appeared with Roc Demon King carried in his arms from above them.

And they could see a deep gash on the shoulder of Roc Demon King that extended all the way to the back of her torso.

Holding his breath, Kouryuu asked his injured sworn sister.

“Is he defeated?”

“..... No. I wanted to give him a few more injuries to worry about, but I don't think the attacks worked on him.”

A simple answer that placed a worrisome look on the face of others.

The firepower of Roc Demon King was the largest among their team in terms of destructiveness. And that was compounded with her Gift that was with a good affinity for the destruction of gods and dragons. Even then, she had not been able to defeat it.

"It is a durability that exceeds the realm of logic..... Although it isn't like I had not thought about that possibility, but it isn't exactly it as well."

"Yeah. There's a high possibility it is near the realm of being defensively enhanced by an Authority of [Host Master]."

The three headed dragon---Azi Dahaka is the [Final Trial of Humanity (Last Embryo)].

As a manifested personification of a Humanity's finial trial, he would have held a power that is on par to the Authority of [Host Master] in his body. And it was safe to assume that their situation was due to some sort of trick that resided within his spiritual status.

"Now that we understand the shortcoming of our battle prowess, let's head back to the city first. There is also a need to tend to Karyou-chan's injury."

"I agree. Let's take the chance to rally our troops while the protection of our Game rules are in effect---"

{“---Did you think I will allow that?”}

The voice that interrupted their conversation caused the group to stiffen in surprise.

And just as soon as the words came, the strike followed shortly after. The group who hid in the shadows of the structures had turned to look at the direction of the fire pillar. But the shadows of the three headed dragon were a step faster than that.

It was a strike that did not come from their blind spot.

It was a direct attack that punctured and carved up the structures along the street in its way as it homed in on them in a straight line.

"Guh, everyone, jump!"

And following the shout from Roc Demon King, the group jumped upwards.

But Leticia slightly lagged in her timing.

"Watch out!"

Kicking the air to get to Leticia, he pulled her up to safety. However, the three headed dragon did not miss that window of opportunity as it wrapped its flashing shadow blades around the length of Jack's body to restrict his movements.

"This is bad... I can't get free.....!"

{“The Pumpkin head is the first to go, huh.”}

Jack was captured by the shadows and pulled through the structures to its owner. And though Jack had been struggling all that time, he was shocked when the three headed dragon came into view.

The three headed dragon was not injured in the slightest after getting hit directly by Roc Demon King's Golden Wing Flames.

(How can that be.....?! To be unscathed after that blaze.....!!!)

It might have been more logical for the opponent to be scratched up a little. But the pure white body of the three headed dragon was perfectly whole. Even if one were to take into account of the possibility of regenerative abilities, it would have been a regenerative ability that exceeded imagination.

Pulling Jack in with its shadows, the three headed dragon laughed and revealed its incisors while swinging its claw down in a swipe.

{“It’s useless thinking about that sort of stuff, [Executor]. A mere ragtag bunch like you guys will never be able to touch my Flag!!!”}

The wicked looking claw was unmercifully swung down across Jack to tear through his body and spill his innards. Falling Jack to the ground immediately.

And as it moved to make a second stroke, Kouryuu and Faceless quickly moved in to block the finishing blow from hitting Jack a second time.

“Leave it to us to buy some time here!”

“Take Jack and fall back! He won’t be dying from that extent of injuries with his immortality!”

The two who were best at close quarter combat took on the responsibility of holding back the three headed dragon.

Whereas Leticia, who wore a pained expression, carried Jack away with her flight abilities that came from the control of her dragon’s shadow.

“Jack, I’m sorry! If only my requirements for activating my authority of [Host Master] were met, we wouldn’t be pushed back this far.....!”

“No..... please. Don’t. Say that. Your [Host Master] ‘s entrusted to you by Shiroyasha-sama, one ‘f our trump cards. Can’t lose. It here.....”

- Cough* Jack coughed out a mouthful of blood and it was then that the others noticed the strangeness with Jack.

.....the wounds, that were on Jack the immortal, did not seem to be regenerating itself.

"Yahoho.... Ara, this is going, to be much rougher than before. It seems, that the riddle surrounding my, game is being gradually unravelled."

"No, No way! That's too fast!"

"No, Vampire, hold up for a moment. It might be a Gift of Azi Dahaka too."

And that suggestion elicited a sharp intake of air from the others as they pondered that frightening notion.

Azi Dahaka, a Demon Lord recorded in legends to have mastered a thousand spells. However, the magic in the past were more often than not the work of science or medicine. And the legends of his mastery over a thousand spells might only suggest at the vast knowledge at the disposal of this Demon Lord.

"And he's a God Killer who would have gone up against many thousands of Authority of [Host Master]s. Even so, it was a hard time sealing him in the past. It might even be taken as proof for our current conjecture that he's in the possession of a Gift that provides him an unconditional assess to knowledge regarding Games."

"What.....!"

If that conjecture were to be true, giving the three headed dragon time to rest would be to their disadvantage. But there was no time for them to worry about these things.

"Damn, anyways let's just retreat for now! Oi Croix! You can hear me right?! Send us back right now if you can hear me!!" Leticia shouted at the skies while facing the airborne castle and the Hosts started to disappear in turn.

And just seconds after that, the Host team vanished without a trace like smoke in the winds.

Turning to stare at the airborne castle, the three headed dragon gave a fierce grin.

{“.....that's a type of teleportation? Well, well, try all your little tricks while you can.”}

With a wave of its right claw, a row of buildings were reduced to rubble. However, it wasn't in a hurry at all.

Although it is true that they were protected by the Game rules, the protection would only last to the point of which the riddles are solved.

Sweeping the Flag on its back as it turned, it made a solemn vow,

{"I will hunt down every last one of them. But meanwhile, they can tremble and continue to await my arrival."}

Part 3

--- [Kouen City]. In the piles of rubble.

Close to the [Kouen City] which was destroyed by the three headed dragon, another battle was unfolding. A storm of explosive fire and a blizzard was brewing in the abandoned land of rubble.

“Aura-san! Oji-chan! Let’s do a pincer attack. Come, time it with me!”

Shouted a figure who was moving quickly to exchange blows with another.

“Got it!”

{“Understood!”}

The clap of thunder that accompanied the plucking of a harp.

Flames that were shot from a black dragon in the skies.

And at the interception of both lines of attack was Maxwell in his brightly coloured blue and red jacket.

“Don’t overestimate yourselves, you pieces of trash!!!”

Spreading his hands, the flames and lightning that shot towards himself were deflected by a sudden explosion. It was most probably an explosion caused by the control of heat to create a sharp temperature difference in the atmosphere.

Although it was only the control of heat, the multiple ways to use that ability was vast to the extremes. It is just fortunate that he preferred to transit between dimensions and did not realise the full potential of its uses, but if he used it in earnest, it would probably have the potential to vaporise a small country in an instant.

If it weren’t for Aura and her golden harp which stabilized the atmospheric pressure of the surroundings, Rin and the others would also be in danger.

“It must have been tough to be targeted by such a powerful stalker. I kinda understand why you are scared of this guy now,” Rin spoke to Willa as she temporarily redrew to the cover of a building.

“.....ah.”

Willa widened her eyes in reply. However, she was shaking her head with tears brimming at the edges of her eyes as she couldn’t follow the sequence of events that led up to this point.

---The following will be mere gossip by the way.

If you were to ask about the biggest victim in this whole battle, then I would think that anyone would also name that person to be Willa the Ignis Faatus.

Let's just start from how she was caught up in the Game hosted by [Ouroboros] which made all residents of the city the victims. However, she was then chased around by a Demon Lord class stalker in the Game and been the target for his verbal abuse and lastly being kidnapped by an unfamiliar girl. This sort of unfortunate series of events can only exist for one person----Willa. Although Willa wished to use her teleportation to escape, the lock type Gift on her hands were exerting a power that stopped her from escaping.

And now, she was still the target of that stalker who continues to pursue her in the city that have been reduced to rubble. It truly is a disastrous day, (I.....wanna go home.....!)

"Willa-san, we are going to run again! Come with me!"

Waah, and she was dragged off again while crying.

Shortly after, that area was covered with a layer of snow from the blizzard.

"Game Controller, hand over my Brideeeeeeee!!!"

".....Hng. Depending on the situation, that might just have been a really romantic proposal, right?"

"Your Highness, this isn't the time to talk about such stuff."

His Highness sprinted in the blizzard along the ground of the destroyed city while Jin Russel straddled the back of the Black Gryphon [Graiya].

Rin speculated that kidnapping Willa would be highly effective in the battle with Maxwell, but the effect had surpassed her expectations.

Maxwell had lost himself for a moment after seeing Willa's kidnapping but he returned to normal to say, "There's actually a person other than me who wants to kidnap Willa?! Just who do you think you are?!", and then he lost himself again.

Perhaps this man was never normal to begin with.

Because of the unexpected intervention of Rin who beat him to the prize, Maxwell gave a roar in madness. And that gave Rin a fright to take off in a hurry and the chase was on until the present moment.

"This is bad. I thought that there would still be ground for negotiations. But he just loves Willa-san too much."

"That doesn't make me happy in the slightest!"

Yeah, you're right. The others around them agreed silently.

{“But what are we to do now? His attacks are monotonous due to his rage but it will be troublesome when he regains his composure. Is it really okay to not launch a counterattack now, Rin? ”} The black gryphon asked Rin blankly.

“Hm~ Although it does seem like an opportunity, there’s also a big possibility that we might revert him into his cool and composed state due to a random and inferior counterattack. And the worst fear we have currently is that he might escape.”

Rin and the others who were ready to rebel against their organisation could not afford to let him slip from this location. They had to bring him down in this place.

{“Though you might say that, but can we come up with a detailed plan on what to do? We will just be caught if this goes on.”}

Rin did not reply to that question but she started to bit her nails as she continued to run while feeling vexed about the situation.

Jin came up with a proposal then.

“Can we just simply taunt him to the limit and make him unable to return to normal?”

“.....Hm. I thought about that as well, but what you do plan to do?”

“That..... will depend on Willa-san, eh?”

Aie? Tears ran down Willa’s face again.

She did not expect her Alliance partner to come up with that sort of suggestion. Or actually, the problem she had should have been with regards to his involvement with the [Ouroboros] in the first place.

“.....Sorry. But we cannot allow Maxwell to leave. He will teleport the clones of Azi Dahaka to the various locations on the lower levels of Little Garden and it will become an unsalvageable situation.”

“...you... you must be lying....?!”

Seeing that Willa was dumbstruck by that revelation, Rin added bitterly.

“It’s not a lie. Because our original plan was to use Maxwell-san’s power to teleport the clones to the various locations if we were able to carry out the Azi Dahaka revival plan successfully.”

The fight between the three headed dragon and Izayoi had already spawned a few hundred clones. And those clones including the ones that attacked the refugees were sent to the lower levels in batches.

It was all thanks to Jack and Kouryuu that the battle was turned towards a more advantageous direction, but if Maxwell were to be left alone, the damages to the lower levels would increase exponentially.

“I guess the [Floor Master]s who aren’t here in this city..... the [OniHime] Alliance and [Laplace Demons] would be activated to stop the clones. But there would be a limit to their capabilities as well. If we do not remove the threat of Maxwell, the casualties will not be limited to only us in the city but the entire lower levels as well. That is not something that our org..... or at least us, who are present here of the [Ouroboros], wish to happen.”

“That is a situation that we of the [No Name]s are unable to ignore as well. And for the sake of defeating Maxwell, it is necessary for Willa-san’s assistance in our plans.”

Willa, who now understood the predicament that they were in and the worst possible outcomes, forced a nod. And it really was a forced nod. In reluctance. Although she did not know why the reasons for Rin and His Highness’s actions, it would seem that they were plotting to rebel against their organisation of [Ouroboros].

Then, it might just be advantageous for the situation to call for a ceasefire.

“But, But, what are we to do? Do you know of any way to defeat Maxwell?”

“Aiya, should I say that it’s impossible to defeat the [Third Perpetual Motion Machine] or should I say that it isn’t suitable to be defeated.....”

“..... Rin, although you mentioned that term earlier, but what exactly is that [Third Perpetual Motion Machine]?”

“It’s a secret. Although I wish I could say that, but we are currently allies in the same cause. Well, I will just tell you the things that do not hamper our plans to you later.”

“But, we will want a reward” His Highness giggled, and Jin could only return a bitter smile.

But Jin also started to sieve through his memory as those words gave him a feeling that he had heard something similar somewhere.

Aura, who did not notice that pensiveness, walked over to provide her proposal and her robes rippled in her gait.

“Your Highness. Should we try to bait Maxwell to activate his [Host Master]?”

“..... Mhm. It does sound plausible since we were all told of the details of his Game content, and that the answer is something related to the [Black Box], the region that cannot be observed. Let’s have him self-destruct by means of

clearing his Game and hence making him our servant to be summoned at any time. How's that idea?"

"Ew, Your Highness, do you want that sort of servant?"

"Totally not."

"I knew it!"

{"Then, we can only rely on the [Another Cosmology] of His Highness. With the strength of His Highness, that sort of Demon Lord can be erased completely with a strike."}

But upon hearing that suggestion, His Highness shook his head.

"Well, that's true, but if I were to use [Another Cosmology] on him, I would also crush the spiritual attainment of the [Third Perpetual Motion Machine]. If that were to happen, how would we retrieve it from him later? It will not be possible to retrieve it with just us alone right?"

"If that is your only worry, then everything's fine. It's said that the [Third Perpetual Motion Machine]'s spiritual attainment will return to its true possessor and that person has already been sealed three years ago. So there's no need for Your Highness to worry. If you defeat Maxwell here in any way, it will just return to its original possessor"

"Mhm? Then that leaves the question of how to land a strike on him in the first place."

At this point, Willa raised her hand to catch their attention. "That, That's the most difficult part. If Maxwell so desires, he is capable of activating his portal to escape into the between at any point in time. That was also the method he used to escape three years ago. "

That's right. Maxwell is adept at activating his teleportation ability.

In addition to that strength of his, the Gift that controls heat makes him one of the toughest person to be an enemy. Even if they were to use Willa to taunt him, it wasn't an absolute certainty that she is enough to keep him distracted.

And while His Highness and the others were coming up with a plan, Maxwell wasted no time in catching up to them with a blast of icy wind and numerous icicle spears were hurled in their direction.

But seeming to mock at that attack, Demon King of Confusion released his dragon flames while laughing brightly, "Hmphahaha! What's this! What's this! And you call yourself a Game controller-sama? Such a simple plan and you've not thought it up until now?"

“.....Mhm. Then, O Demon King of Confusion-sama, what plan have you arrived at?”

“Oi, of course I’ve a plan. That’s the main focus isn’t it? That intelligent perverted Demon has been mesmerised by that big breasted girl over there right? Then wouldn’t that leave only one way to taunt him?”

Aha, Demon King of Confusion gave a sly smile.

Jin and His Highness tilted their heads and exchanged a glance as they could not catch the meaning of it.

Only Rin clapped her hands in agreement as she understood his words.

“Oh, that way. That might just work out.”

“As expected of Rin-san. Your observation skills are quite good. ---Can you pull it off?”

“Aiya Aiya, just leave it to me. That kind of thing is a piece of cake.”

Saying that, Rin stopped short in her tracks. It would seem that she had some sort of plan and the others who understood that the situation was about to get messier were also readying themselves for battle.

On the other hand, Maxwell appeared above them thinking that they were ready to give up.

“Game controller-dono, the oni kakurenbo game is over?” [6]

Exactly like their fears, Maxwell was gradually recovering to his normal self.

That composure would surely spell the worst scenario for them.

Rin looked at Willa and hesitated for a moment before hugging the chained up Willa.

“That’s right. The oni kakurenbo is over. But we will be starting the hide and seek from now, so do accompany us for a little.”

“Wha, and here I was wondering what you would come up with. Do you think that I will continue to accompany you in your little game? With things as they are now, let me tell you this. Your betrayal was well within our calculations. Leader-sama has given me the green light to all the others besides His Highness. Because the only one needed to overcome Kali Yuga is His Highness.”[7]

“.....Aye?”

The eyes of Rin lit up with an intensity. It must have been a piece of important information. That gaze was exactly like a female cheetah who spotted its prey. On the other hand, Jin who overheard the conversation

between Rin and Maxwell, did not miss the important details of that talk. Although the talk did not explain the full details.

(Kali Yuga..... [The age of vice (Kali Yuga)]? Why would that sort of thing be related to His Highness?)

(Jin. Do you know something about it?) Pest asked Jin as she stayed in her standby state in the ring of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Jin gave a slight nod of his head that was less than noticeable to the people around him

(Hm, because it is a long explanation, I will just cut the details and get straight to the point. It is the era where religions have come to an end and following the advancement of Human civilisation, Humans have come to lose their beliefs. And they enter an age of immorality and inconsideration.)

(When you mention about the advancement of Human civilisation, do you refer to the ages of the 1900s to 2000s AD? I heard that it's the period that had lots of advancements in energy production and a gradual lost in religious faith. I also heard that it's the age where new gods and divine spirits are unable to be born.)

(Mhm..... But, how do I say this. Because of the close relationship between Kali Yuga and astrology, the derived dates from the perspective of Little Garden will differ from that of Earth and it is difficult to confirm the exact start of that age.)

(.....Mhm? That what does it mean by overcoming Kali Yuga?)

(It is literally what it means. Kali Yuga is the fourth part of the era cycle and when the time comes, it will continue on to a new era. Or that is my guess on the meaning of those words.)

But, why would that be connected to His Highness?

Jin accelerated his thoughts.

[Kali Yuga] and the [Third Perpetual Motion Machine], and the true identity of His Highness.

He was pondering over the cause, effect and relationship between those three and then suddenly,

(---Wait a moment. Just now, didn't they mention something more important?)

(Aye?)

Because that was something that Jin had yet to witness for himself, he was unable to come up with an answer to it immediately. But he was sure that he had gotten for himself a piece of information that would give him the biggest opportunity to land a heavy strike upon the [Ouroboros] Alliance.

Not noticing the change in Jin, Rin turned away her gaze from Maxwell.

“Is that so? Even our betrayal is within calculations? My, I’m really impressed. How many steps did that person see in advance?”

“Hou? As expected of leader-sama, even Game controller-dono is unable to surpass his predictions?”^[8]

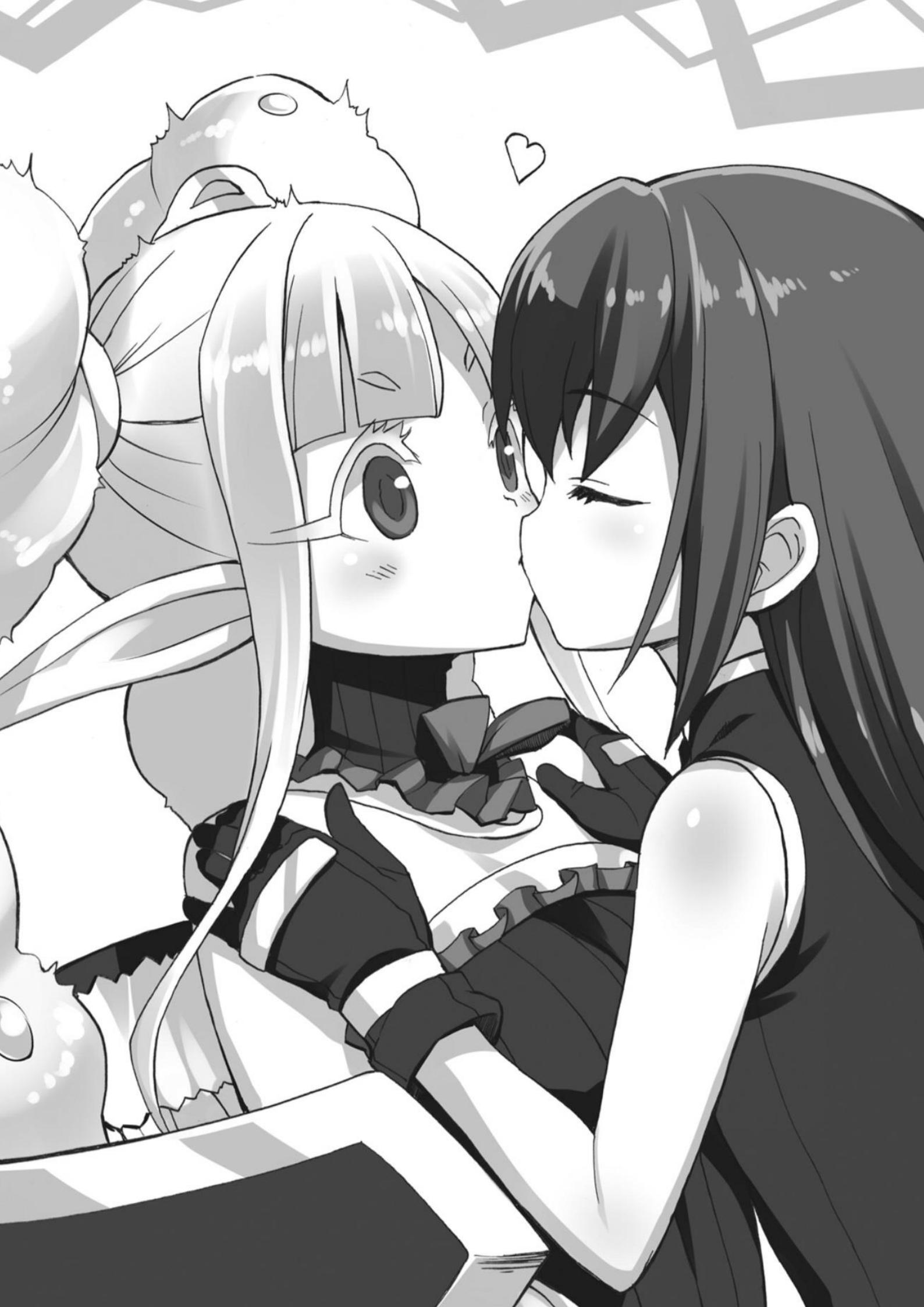
“.....Yeah, it sure is, just like a freakish monster. That person is really a monster to be able to predict this sort of development. And if all the sequence of events were predicted from the start--- ”

Understanding the situation and what she needed to do next, Rin closed her eyes as she brought up her dagger to her shoulder level, “it just means that Maxwell, you are the sacrifice here.”

Saying that, Rin changed her expression immediately to smile sweetly while hugging Willa tightly. And Willa started to protest this move with her struggles but Rin’s devilish hand was much faster.

Switching her dagger to her other hand, she freed it to grab Willa properly, moving ever closer to her face, tipping it up by the chin and----

“Then, excuse me?”



---took Willa's lovely lips.

" " " ---Wha-!" "

Jin, Maxwell and Pest shouted simultaneously but were unable to utter another word.

Willa, the victim, was unable to comprehend the situation as her mind went completely blank. ---However, the sensation of the soft tongue that slid into her mouth brought her back to her senses.

"Mo, Ah, Wait.....!?"

"Stop talking. You will bite your tongue."

Saying that softly and resuming the act of fusing their lips once more.

The tongue invaded further this time with a higher level of intimacy. Gently licking at the inner cheeks of the desperately resisting Willa, the tongue belonging to the younger of the two then charged into the depths of Willa's mouth in an instant, leaving no time for her to react.

Having her first time forced upon her, Willa desperately hit Rin's back to signal her to stop but that struggle soon became feeble. And as her finger tips slightly relaxed, that was when Rin finally released her lips and the thin sticky strand between their lips fell to the ground.

When their gazes met, Willa immediately bent her head as her ears turned a bright red.

Perhaps it might be a strange thing to see a demon embarrassed by such a degree of kissing, but it was still her first experience after all. Willa fell weakly to the ground as her body felt exhausted from the experience that ran through her like an electric current that fried her senses. It was just as if she had completed an intense workout.

Rin placed Willa's arm over her shoulder while slipping her arm to support Willa's other side as well before facing Maxwell with a taunting smile.

".....Okay, that's how it is. Can you tell me what you are feeling now, Mr Maxwell? What's the feeling to see the kiss stolen from your soon to be bride?"

"---....."

It was an unexpected silence and there was no change in his expression.

Rin blinked her eyes as she cursed her luck.

".....Eih? There's not much of a reaction huh? Let's do it another time?"

"No, Don't want.....!!"

"But if our taunt fails here and he escapes, his stalking behaviour towards you will probably get worse you know? For example hiding under your bed or leaping from the space between when you are in the toilet."

"I've already experienced that sort of thing."

"Ooh, is that for real? Well, I guess I have to praise you for keeping yourself together until now." Rin was surprised by that unexpected retort.

But if they were to leave things as they were, it would surely turn ugly. This way, they could only attempt to up the game with an increased ferocity. Placing her hand on Willa's clothes as she thought until that point, that was when Maxwell roared with an emotionless stare.

"---[Summon Maxwell myths. 3S, nano machine unit]---!!!" ↪

Aye? Hearing that summoning for the first time, Rin and Willa had doubted their hearing. They were expected for him to activate his Authority of [Host Master] but he had called out for a "Summon" instead.

It was understood that it was some sort of summoning ritual but only Demon Lord of Confusion widened his eyes upon hearing those words.

"[Summon myths]? Oi Oi. Is it for real? Things are going to get ugly from here."

"Aye?"

"Sorry, I forgot to explain. That guy hid it so well all these time. Tch, it is as they say that he's of the four digits huh? This guy's real identity isn't that of a Demon Lord! Everyone scatter and run! The gods are coming!!!" Demon Lord of confusion shouted as he was starting to be covered in his cold sweat.

The group retreated to a distance even though they were unable to comprehend the current situation as they realised that that would be the best option at the moment.

On the other hand, Maxwell, who was already beyond the state of anger was at the epicentre of a storm of heat waves and chilly winds. The intermingling of the cold and heat waves that intercepted each other in almost a thousand times per second was beyond the rules of the physical world and it caused the particles of the atmosphere to rampage out of control.

Breaking through the seams of the world, space shattered like a broken glass panel.

And out came two figures wreathed in fiery heat and icy winds from the gap.

Wings sprouted from the backs of these armoured monsters and though they might not appear to be living organisms, their iron-like surface pulsed with a similarity to that of blood vessels running below the surface.

And while everyone was surprised at the appearance of the strange monsters, Aura gave a small cry in despair.

"This spiritual power..... don't tell me that those are angels.....?!"

"Those are angels?! Did you mean those monsters over there?!"

"No, That's not it! Not, but I think....."

"But they are surely beings that are close to angels! A summon ritual that calls out the word "myths" is definitely one that summon gods! And it is something that a Demon Lord is unable to accomplish! Those who can do it are the elder gods, poets and Queen herself." [note: elder gods are the main gods of each mythological faction]

Hearing Demon Lord of Confusion's exclamation, Rin grinded her teeth together.

"What's happening.....?! Then, the real identity behind the Third Perpetual Motion Machine would be,"

"Now's not the time to dally around analysing those stuff, they are coming!"
The angels spread their wings and charged forth with their sword and spear respectively.

Scrambling to their battle positions after hearing the warning from His Highness, they formed a line to meet the incoming mysterious angels.

Charging into an incoming angel, His Highness grabbed the hand that held the spear to prevent it from being wielded. Giving the hand a twist, he then launched a kick to the top of his opponent's helmet.

Though he might be small in stature, his strength easily shattered he helmet with a kick. After all, it was what allowed him to fight on par with Izayoi to have dragged out that long battle from before.

However, the one who was surprised was His Highness who initiated the attack.

(What's happening? This kind of feedback. It's just as though I've kicked a cloud. There's no sensation.....!?)

The accuracy of that instinctive analysis was soon provided with immediate proof. Moments after the destruction of the angel's helmet, a swirl of fog seemed to condense in that location to repair it to its original state.

And giving a creaking sound of *creak creak creak*, the steel angel brought up its spear and disappeared.

(A teleportation?! Where did it go?)

{"Your Highness! Behind you!"}

Quickly turning his head to see the blackish-red light rimming the steel angel as it emitted heat in its downward swing of its spear.

But this slash and sudden thrust should have been expected to be of no effect on His Highness. Hence His Highness, who understood that fact, judged the blow to be too late for dodging and took on the spear directly while planning to return an attack from there.

His right chest was pierced as he expected it to but the impact was what shocked him the most.

(That's heavy.....!?)

That was a strike from a stiff movement that told of no special techniques involved. However, that absurd strength behind the strike was enough to stop His Highness in his steps. If it were any of the others such as Graiya or Aura, they would be cleanly punctured to their deaths with that attack. Setting aside their possible intelligence for now, their strength was truly of a divine realm.

And so, His Highness made his decision.

"Rin, Aura, Graiya! And Willa, Jin, Pest! I will be the opponent for this guy and Maxwell! I will leave the sword wielding one to you guys! Use Rin's Gift to put distance between yourself and the opponent while searching up for the identity of these guys! Remember, don't get close to them no matter what!"

"Understood! We will count on Your Highness to buy us time while searching answers to their real identities!"

"May our Flags fly victorious!"

Saying that, the others besides His Highness started to run towards the outskirts.

But only Jin who rode on Graiya's back was deep in thought over the symbol emblazoned on the chest of those angels.

(Where have I seen..... that Flag.....?)

A Flag that used the theme of flower petals. Although he was sure that he had not seen it with his eyes before today, he was certain that he had heard

of it somewhere. But no matter how hard he tried, that piece of information just did not seem to come to him now.

(Damn, why can't I remember it?! I definitely heard of this symbol somewhere!))

Jin gritted his teeth as he struggled to comb his memories for that information. But the adrenaline from the battle situation was making his thoughts sluggish. The shortfall of having no actual battle experience before now was starting to make its presence known here.

The group left the streets to enter the forest and were transversing through the unchartered sea of trees.

Amidst the frantic and chaotic vortex, the battle continues to intensify.

Chapter 4

Part1

---In the Great Hall of the Vampire's airborne citadel

The airborne castle looked better after the make-over by the residents of [Underwood]. However, the great hall was now filled with the injured refugees and the bedrooms were long occupied by those with grievous wounds. Whereas, those who were lightly injured were given towels for blankets and they huddle in the corners where space was available.

The heavily injured of the fire dragon squads lay in the courtyard to nurse to their wings while harbouring feelings of self-reproach.

And among the injured was the figure of Izayoi. A bed had been prepared for him by Jack who prioritized the retrieval to rush him back to the airborne castle. An apt description of his current appearance would be that of a person who is riddled with sores and puncture marks.

The bones of his fists were pounded to bits, his organs were seriously damaged and the loss of blood was already beyond the point of critical stage.

It was already an incredible feat for him to survive in that state. And the members of [No Name] ---Lily and Shirayuki, who spotted his form riddled with wounds, gave a small cry.

"Iza, Izayoi-sama.....!"

"My lord.....!"



They probably travelled over together with Leticia. And behind them were the other children of the Senior group. Seeing that [Ouroboros] was finally making its move, the Community headquarters would not be a safe location anymore and it made more sense to have them at the front lines to support their Community in the war efforts.

And witnessing the dire state of Izayoi's condition was enough to rob them of their tongues. As the supporting members of the Community, the children were greatly shaken by the defeat of Izayoi who was one of the strongest combatants in the Community.

There were lads who were trembling and looking pale, girls who covered their mouths as tears rolled down their cheeks. But of the Senior group, Lily's reaction was swift and decisive.

"Get.... Get me a tub of hot water and lots of bandages. And bring the blood producing medicine and the unicorn's horn over!" 『』

"Aye, ah,"

"Quickly! It's still possible to make it in time, everyone, get them on the double!"

Lily sprinted over to Izayoi with a handkerchief. Although there were simple treatments and immediate response given to all who were sent in, the body had yet to be sanitized. The people in charge of the emergency procedures were just too busy to deal with that detail and Lily used her handkerchief to wipe away the blood from Izayoi's face.

"Everyone, get over here now!!" Lily turned back to shout to the Senior group who stood rooted in shock.

" " " " Ye, Yes, understood!!!" " " "

PaDaPaDaPaDa!!! The Senior group ran over to Lily. And during that time, Lily prepared the necessary tools to be used in conjunction with the unicorn horn while giving Izayoi's body a final cleansing of those spots of blood.

A thin film of tears was misting her sight as she spoke quietly,
".....Shirayuki-sama, there's still hope for Izayoi-sama right?"

"Hm," giving a fast reply, Shirayuki joined Lily with a damp handkerchief to help with the cleaning of Izayoi's body while watching Lily work. Wiping the tears from her face as they fell from her eyes with her hand, Lily continued to carry out her task at hand.

---what a strong little girl she is. Shirayuki was impressed as she formed a new opinion about Lily. And in her gaze was something close to respect for this little girl.

Although Lily was still at the age where many other kids of her age would still be happy to be fussed over by their mothers, Lily had been managing the housework of the whole Community and taking care of the farmlands. Even the others below her station were clinging to her like younger siblings to an elder sister. And facing the tragic situation in the Community, she had been moving forward fearlessly. An ordinary girl would have fainted upon seeing such a large amount of blood and wounds. Though the treating of wounds might not be much of an accomplishment, it was more than enough when said to be done by a mere ten year old girl.

Her inner strength and the radiance of her soul was something that even a Divinity holder like Shirayuki could not ignore.

(..... *My lord. You can't let this endearing little lady cry like that.*)

Silently making her retort at Izayoi. But there were other matters on Shirayuki's mind.

Let's just say it here---- Shirayuki never thought much about Izayoi in the first place. The first impression was solely based on their first encounter but the fact is that her judgement for his character was ranked in the lower ends.

She had always thought that Izayoi was one who possessed a great talent from birth and a completely overweening attitude but was one who would easily suffer a setback when faced with an opponent who was stronger than him.

.....however, that was not the case in reality.

Izayoi had battled. Not only did he not run in the face of such strong opponent who stood above him in terms of talents and he had gambled his life in the battle to save his comrades. Ultimately ending in defeat.

To some, those who challenged a hopeless battle were nothing but fools.

After all, the victorious were kings and the losers, the invaders.

The prerequisite of righteousness is to be victorious. And this lad, Izayoi, is only so arrogantly fixated with victory due to his unwavering belief in his self-righteousness.

---But this lad had thrown himself into a battle which he had no chance of winning.

Knowing full well that he would taste the humiliation of defeat, Izayoi continued to battle selflessly.

As one of the holders of Divinity, Shirayuki was apologetic for her misjudgement of character. And towards her lord who displayed extraordinary courage and determination, she offered her highest praise.

(Don't die on us, my lord. Because the one who will defeat the Demon Lord is one----who always hold the courage anywhere, anytime to use all their might to land their strike.)

Shirayuki's instincts were telling her that there would be a time that they would need this lad's power once again.

And seeming to confirm that feeling of hers, the airborne castle shook violently.

".....the shockwaves from the battle are reaching here as well.....?!"

If she could, she would have wanted to help with the fight as well. However, this was a scale that was beyond a Divinity Holder. Hence, Shirayuki could only help with the preparations on the support side while praying for her comrades who are battling for their sakes.

At the same time.

Kasukabe Yō was invited to join Sala at the command room. The previously uninhabited airborne castle was now filled with furnishings and decorum from the city of [Underwood].

And besides Yō and Sala who were in the room, there was a guest member of the [Draco Greif] alliance--- Coppelia. Sitting on a chair as she could not walk even if she wanted to, Yō blinked in surprise upon learning the news that Coppelia had remained in [Draco Greif] all these time.

"Coppelia, long time no see, but why would you be here?"

"Well, there isn't anyone in the Game Controller post for [Draco Greif] so I'm just standing in for them. Although we can say that the perpetual motion machine is completed, it's still not at the final form that I hoped it to be. And I reckon that it would be more advantageous to belong to a large scale Community when searching for my father."

Right, Yō gave a wry smile as she remembered the incidences that led up to Sala's promotion.

She---Coppelia, was someone whom they had met during their stay with the [Draco Greif] while arranging the talks for the formation of their Community's Alliance. She was also a doll who controls the [Third Perpetual Motion Machine].

Finding her trapped in a Game of Paradox by chance, they of the [No Name] had used a slight cheat to clear the game and that is how it is up till this point.

"If I knew that there would be such a game, I would have studied harder in school."

"**Miss** Kasukabe. Please forgive my rudeness, but the [Third Perpetual Motion Machine] isn't something of a simple structure that can be found in a compulsory education. It wouldn't have mattered whether or not if you are a hardworking student then."^[2]

"That's Mah, you're right."

Although that wasn't what she had meant, she did not try to clarify that as there wasn't the time to talk about those stuff. There was a need to prioritise the report on KuroUsagi and Asuka's situation and the battle at [Kouen City] after all.

After Sala and Coppelina heard the full report from Yō, their expressions darkened as they folded their arms.

"We've got the gist of the situation..... but, that's troubling. The condition of [No Name] is much worse than I had expected."

"Yeah. There's no way for us to help them if we do not know the location that they were thrown to."

".....Mhm. It's not only KuroUsagi and Asuka. Even Pest and Willa are also missing in action. Will they be able to participate in this Game?"

"If they are not at the location when it activated, they won't be able to participate later. The current Game stage is special one. After all, this is a large scale stage that borrows the Authority of an entire star from [Perseus]. We can just count it as the transference of everyone to an entirely different world from that of Little Garden."

"Is, Is that so? Then is Garol-san around, maybe we can still ask a bit about this [Genome Tree]."

"Uhm..... Although that is also important, Garol-dono is also one of the few surviving members of the first battle against Azi Dahaka 200 years ago. If it weren't for the negotiations that sent him far away, I would have liked him to join us for the battle....."

And Sala lifted her head suddenly, seeming to have realised something.

"..... No, wait, that's it! There's also another one who can solve all these problems! If it is him, it might just work out!"

"Who do you mean?"

"It's the one who told us about the situation of your side and invited [Queen Halloween] to lend us her help. If it weren't for the help of [Queen], there wouldn't be any way to move this airborne castle all the way to the North Side in the first place."

"Is that so? Sounds like a really incredible person to me."

"That's not all. He's also someone who has deep connections with the [No Name]. After all, he's"

"Did you call me?"

Ha? The three other people in the room gave a gasp in surprise.

It was not known when the guy in question had arrived. But wearing a round bowler hat and a tuxedo while having another short jacket over his tux, the old gentleman sat on the high chair in the room that was empty moments before.

With an appearance of a seventy year old, his wrinkles and hair which became white with the passing of years was pretty impressionable in itself. But the gaze was startlingly sharp and it felt like something unhuman that seemed keen enough to see through everything.

".....Croix-sama. I've told you many times not to appear so suddenly. It's not good for our hearts."

"The silent approach of the Grim Reaper..... No, we shouldn't be praising him about that!"

Facing Sala and Coppelie's reproach, the old gentleman, who was known by the name of Croix, gave a smile and a shrug of his shoulders, "Well then, sorry for my rude interruption. I just love seeing the look of surprise on others. Besides, were you going to ask me about something?"

"Ah, yes. This is the current [No Name]'s main force, Kasukabe Yō. May I ask that you assist her for a moment?"

HouHou? The elderly gentleman opened his eyes to look at Yō.

Yō lagged a bit in her acknowledging nod. And from the attitude of Sala towards this old gentleman, he should be an important elder in Little Garden. Otherwise, the [Floor Master] Sala, wouldn't have been that stiff in her formalities.

They watched at each other for a moment of silence.

Then the old gentleman suddenly laughed, "I won't know what you want if you do not speak. Is there something that you need from me?"

"Erm, that.....say, who are you, gramps?"

"Aiya, excuse my rudeness. I forgot to say my name. I'm Baron Croix. Moreover, I can be called as one of the predecessors of your Community."

"Predecessor..... then, you are one of the original members of [No Name]?"

"That's right. And it's more of being one of the founders I guess. I've known your father for a long time too."

The unexpected words from Croix caused Yō's heart rate to rise.

Although she was equally surprised by the information regarding her father, if this elderly gentleman was a predecessor of the [No Name], the things that she wanted to know from him would be a mountain load of questions.

Although she wanted to start her questions from the part on her father's information, Yō reined in her curiosity to ask in the order of priority.

"But where have Croix-san been all these while? Weren't you caught like Leticia and sold in the slave-market as well?"

"How would that ever happen? There's no value in this old body for the auctions..... But come to think about it, please tell me the details of Leticia's enslavement."

"Please behave yourself, Croix-sama."

Keho Keho, Sala gave a few fake coughs to pull the topic back to focus.

"Croix-sama was sent to the Outside world after the battle three years ago. I heard that it is all thanks to Faceless-dono..... or more accurately, the strength of [Queen Halloween] that managed to summon him back into Little Garden."

"The masked person? How did she do that?"

"It was done by using this item."

Taking off his bowler hat, Croix reached his hand into its cavity to feel about for a while before pulling out a nekomimi headphone.

Yō blinked her eyes as a surprised look came over her face and she tilted her head in wonder, "Nekomimiheadphones? And that is not the pair that I own?"

"Yes. But it's not an entirely different object. Because this is something that models the very popular item in your time and it is of the same series. And just mentioning on the side, this is a really hot item that is being

advertised as an accessory endorsed by a certain idol in the time that I lived in."

".....?" Not understanding the gist of his words, Yō tilted her head to the side.

Croix sieved out the important points of his words as he gave a wry smile, "to put it simply, these headphones created a "situation that should be in the future, but happening in a different time" sort of microscopic mini paradox. Did you know this? Little Garden collects many systems of these paradoxes. Then, by using those paradoxes in reverse, one would be able to determine precisely the location in the time flow where I currently reside in."

"It acted as a Gift that stabilized the space between the two flows of time. It's a phenomenon similar to the summoning of heroes in order to retrieve them from the flow of time," Sala added and Croix nodded in affirmation.

"That's right. The summoning we made to change that phenomenon..... is known as Paradox Shift. Anyways, a temporary isolated paradox like this would not make a difference to the larger picture be it of a small or large scale, so it will just be left aside easily. I was just lucky to be found by [Queen's Knight] at that time. It seems that I'm not forsaken by luck yet. Hence I'm able to rush back in this time of need and Yō, it is all thanks to you."

Pressing the bowler hat atop his head, Croix gave a bow in gratitude.

Digesting the load of information slowly, Yō nodded her head a few times before lifting her head, "it means to say..... the nekomimi headphones sent out an SOS signal of sorts..... is that it?"

"If you put it plainly, it's just as you said. Truthfully, I've also put in place many other SOS sounding devices but never did I expect for the nekomimi headphones to be the first one to receive and establish a connection. All that effort, to put the [Bootstrap Paradox] in place to be set off at any time, had gone to waste."

Hahaha, Croix gave a loud laugh. It was really difficult to grasp what this guy was thinking.

Yō paid no attention to his laugh as she thought back to the words that Faceless once said.

(Come to think about it, during that time when the nekomimi headphones were summoned, she did say something like "there's a weird flow of time" or sorts. Is this what she meant ?)

She said that the reason was the [Genome Tree] but it did not feel like the power that should be possessed by the [Genome Tree]. Perhaps, the reason might have been the effect of the nekomimi headphones.

Listening to their conversation, Coppelina gave a gasp in surprise.

"Croix-san. That's not something to laugh about. If you set off a [Bootstrap Paradox], it will develop into something big and you will be punished by the higher echelons of Little Garden. What are you planning to do if you take a misstep and trigger off a [Paradigm Shift] instead?"

"Mah, don't make it sound so bad. After all, Laplace's terminal body was also with me and that would have guaranteed the stop of any situation that may escalate to that worst possible scenario you've described. ---Moreover, to bring up the [Bootstrap Paradox] when you hold the [Third Perpetual Motion Machine], that's against really unfair right? After all, the fact that you exist is precisely because of that paradox."

Facing the sudden glint of slyness in his eyes, Coppelina was made to fall silent. Those sharp eyes were enough to give one the feeling of having their souls bared before him.

He's not just an ordinary person, Coppelina raised her guardedness as she came to that conclusion.

Yō seemed to have noticed the uncomfortable atmosphere and she clapped her hands to change that while asking her question, "Um that... What is a [Bootstrap Paradox]?"

And faced with the question from Yō, Coppelina was surprised, "Pardon me if I'm being impolite **Miss** Kasukabe. I thought that you would have heard of it because of how famous it is. To put it simply, it is a paradox game that came from a real 18th Century German novel that focuses on the adventures of a noble who goes by the name of Baron Munchausen. [3]--- have you heard of that? For example, the paradoxes of 'the bottomless swamp and the boot' or 'the time machine'?"

"Well perhaps the paradox about the chicken and egg is better known in Japan. You've heard of that right? The story where the Origin (alpha) and End (omega) is the same?" Seeing the confusion on Yō's face, Croix stepped in to supplement Coppelina's words. [4]

And Yō finally nodded her head as she got a grasp of the explanations.

From before, there was such a topic discussed in one of the literary works recommended by Izayoi.

Yō vaguely remembered the title of the novel to be <<The tall tale adventures of Baron Munchausen>>. And there was only one story in the novel that talked about the incident between the bottomless swamp and a boot.

"Uhm. I kind of remember a chapter regarding a Baron who was about to sink into a bottomless swamp..... and he had to grab his leg to pull himself out of the swamp---was that the story you were referencing to?"

"Yes, that's the one. Bootstrap refers to the circular strip sewn to the back of the boot. Of course, if we were to look at it from the logical perspective, this method would not be able to achieve his aim of lifting himself out of the swamp. It is purely a work that plays upon that contradiction. Another work for the easy understanding of the paradox would be <<By his bootstraps>> written by Robert Anson Heinlein and his related time machine paradox stories.

"...? Sorry, you have lost me for that part."

Seeing Yō shake her head, Coppelina was wide eyed and dumbfounded at her reaction.

Just like having an unbelievable object placed before her, Coppelina paused for a moment to fold her arms in contemplation while watching Yō. She then retrieved a book from her Gift Card, which was emblazoned with the petal symbolled flag, and handed it to Yō.

"This is a famous work of his. Please make sure you read it."

".....Ah, okay."

Pressurized by such an intimidating intensity from Coppelina, Yō nodded and accepted the book.

Coppelina's intimidating expression was not an illusion at all.

Croix suppressed the urge to laugh at the scene while he spun his cane, "Mah, how should I say this. Even the gods of Little Garden view the [Bootstrap Paradox] as a problem to them. So it wouldn't hurt to read up on it."

"I, I got it."

"Mhm. Then, is that all that you have to ask me?"

"No, that wasn't the main problem," Sala interjected quickly while giving Yō the look. Although they had veered off from the main topic, there should be many more things that she would want to ask this person. Since he was her father's friend and one of the founders of [No Name], he might know something about the [Genome Tree] to help her.

Taking off the necklace from her neck, she handed it over to Croix to have him look it over.

"This is the Gift that my dad left to me..... [Genome Tree], but it's suddenly failed to function. Croix-san, would you happen to know the reason for that?"

".....Mhm?" Without taking the [Genome Tree] that was held out to him, Croix only tipped the edge of his bowler hat upward to get a closer look. It seemed that he hesitated for a moment before smiling while giving a shrug of his shoulders.

"..... Don't worry, it's only temporary. It will be back to normal after some time."

"Really?"

"Aah. This is a phenomenon caused by the overusage of spiritual power that exceeds the existing stored spiritual power in the [Genome Tree] itself. And in an attempt to protect you from harm, it has temporarily shut off its functions."

And a relieved look finally came over Yō's face.

"Is, Is that so.....?! Then, how long will it take to recover?"

"That will depend on the total amount of spiritual power that you have collected..... but it should be able to be back to normal in a month's time?"

But his answer was what caused Yō's shoulder to droop. Then, that would have meant that Yō was to be benched for the current battle. Although there was a boost in their numbers with many strong warriors arriving to help with the war, an extra hand in the combatant ranks is always welcomed.

To be told that she could only watch and pray for the others, Yō's gaze drifted downwards with unhidden sadness in her eyes.

So Croix leaned upon his cane to stand up and took the [Genome Tree] into his hand.

"---but, it's not like there isn't a method to make it usage again immediately."

"Really?!"

"There is no actual proof yet, but there's something I would like to try. May I borrow this [Genome Tree] for a while?"

"Uu, Mhm. It's also of no use to my current self."

The current Yō couldn't even be counted as one of the combatants and was purely a burden at this point. Getting the [Genome Tree] back to normal was her priority.

Giving a warm smile like how a grandparent would have while looking at their grandchildren, Croix stood up and walked over to Yō, "Let's talk about your father when you come to retrieve your [Genome Tree] next time. Although the situation is pressing, there will still be time for our chat. Please wait at his.....The room where little Izayoi is sleeping."

"Ye, Yes."

The old gentleman with the bowler hat winked out of existence like smoke in the winds after he spoke those words. And though there might be a troubled look in those all-seeing eyes of his, it was already an unexpected deal to be able to hear of her father's news. Perhaps it might also give the clue that will help them out of their desperate situation.

"But, we have found a solution for the current problem at the very least."

"Mhm. Next would be the problem of finding KuroUsagi and Asuka....."

"There's no need to worry about those two I guess. There aren't that many strong individuals who can match up against them in the world of Little Garden. Moreover, they are most likely to make it through even if they were to meet a clone of Azi Dahaka."

Sala gave a laugh while patting Yō's back. But little did she know that KuroUsagi had lost her spiritual powers and Asuka was teleported away without most of her Gifts. It was truly the worst possible scenario and they should start the search as soon as possible.

(I will need to discuss this with Croix-san later. Maybe he might have a plan for that.)

Although she wanted to start the discussion on the search for Asuka and KuroUsagi, Yō decided that it would be best held in Izayoi room later. After all, if it's Izayoi, he would surely help with the strategizing.

In the midst of the chaos wrought by the battle with the three headed dragon, the trio left the room on their separate tasks as directed by their responsibilities.

Part 2

---In another room of the airborne castle. Izayoi's room for recuperation.

"My, My, what a good girl she is. It's just such a waste that she's your child."

{"-----"}

Baron Croix, who had spirited himself away like the clouds to the winds, had appeared in another room in the airborne castle. And in that room, Izayoi slept soundly on a bed, wrapped in several layers of bandages. Clearly, it was a specialised room to spare Izayoi some time to recuperate from his injuries as much as he could.

And taking advantage of that room's secluded characteristic, Croix chose it to be the meeting place for a certain person.

"Are you not planning to meet her? I'm sure she would be very happy to see you," Croix continued to speak to the other person who hid on the other side of the window.

{".....Croix. Why, did you lie to her?"}

The person in the shadows did not answer Croix's question but seemed to have struggled to say those words with a slight hint of hostility.

Waving the bowler hat in his hand, Croix then covered his face and gave a shrug of his shoulders, "I did not lie to her. I was only holding back some information, that's all."

"And those just happen to be the most important. Be it the case of the [Genome Tree], and the truth about how you were summoned back to the world of Little Garden. If we were to consider the activities of [Ouroboros], there should also be a much more serious paradox occurring in the early 2000s."}

".....Hmph. Then go tell her that yourself. You're her father and she's your daughter right? Don't push the responsibility to me, that's just being a pain in the ass."

Croix was unable to maintain his calm as he reverted to his loud and uncouth speech patterns. Following a sudden violent waver in his shadows, Croix revealed his spiritual aura to display his godly side while opening those eyes which seem capable of piercing the veil that shrouds the soul.

[Baron Croix]--- as a god of the Vodou mythologies and the god of lust, his existence was represented by his bowler hat and the swallowtail tuxedo which also forms the core of his spiritual power. To word it in reverse, there wouldn't be any other real appearance of the Death god besides that. As long as it's with the appearance of a person with a bowler hat and a swallow-tailed tuxedo, it will be as clear as day for anyone to identify him.

And his current body was only that of a youth's body taken from the realm of the death.

A god whose nature was one that loved good cigars, rum and lewd sex, was also the god of life. And this god who controlled life, was now looking at a certain person, with eyes keen enough to see through the soul of the one hidden in the shadows, while continuing his lecture.

"I was only giving her some attention out of consideration of our relationship as comrades and you just take it for granted that it is a responsibility of mine? Now, you think that you are some big stuff huh? Trying to criticize on my methods now? Shouldn't you be taking action to show your sincerity in the first place?"

{".....If I could do that, I would have done so by now!"}

Perhaps the lecture might have hit upon a bad memory of sorts as the low voice in the shadows had also increased in volume. And it was a quavering voice shadowed with a tone of sadness.

There was no father who did not want to meet his daughter. If he could, he would definitely go to meet her. But it's precisely because of his inability to do so that he had to rely on his old friend to help with that.

Knowing the reason behind it all, Croix also stopped his lecture as he noted that he might have gone a little too far with his outburst.

Pressing his bowler hat while giving a sign, his tone reverted to before as he gave a shrug of his shoulders, "Mah.....Regarding the [Genome Tree], maybe I should let her understand it's inner workings. I would not wish for such a cute girl to walk the same steps as you."

{".....Sorry. I will have to trouble you to do that."}

"Yeah. Both you and Canaria, always pushing the important things to me. Please think a little about the troubles that you have delegated the responsibilities to from time to time. Oh man, I would really love to ask of you guys to cultivate a habit of cleaning up after yourselves."

{"So,Sorry."}

A rather embarrassed apology that hinted that there were many more incidences other than this that happened in the past. And the voice in the shadows was truly embarrassed by those memories.

But shaking his head, Croix stood up and threw the [Genome Tree] to the shadows while stating his request, "Yare Yare, apply your spiritual power into the [Genome Tree] for me. It doesn't matter if she can utilise it to its maximum effect, but she would be needing that power. For the sake of

defeating Azi Dahaka, that girl..... No, the power of those two will be needed. After all we will never be able to defeat the [(Last Trial of humanity)Last Embryo] no matter how much we struggle."

{"Got it. After dealing with the business with [Genome Tree], I will also ready a Game stage too."}

"Then I will leave the outside matters to you. Just destroy any two headed dragons that you may come across as well then."

Following that, the presence within the shadows disappeared.

"..... Though I may say so. But how many people will actually survive in this battle?"

Staying behind in the room by himself, Croix rested his hands on his cane while spitting his thoughts bitterly.

"Heh? I can't pretend not to hear that you know?"

The unexpected sound of Izayoi's voice caused Croix's brows to lift in surprise. Although his injuries had been serious enough to make it difficult for him to recover consciousness, he just had to choose this moment to regain his consciousness.

Clicking his tongue in his heart, he commented sarcastically to the eavesdropper.

"Eavesdropping is bad manners, Izayoi. I would really love to meet your parents about that."

"You mean my biological parents? Or the parents who have brought me up? Not that I care which are the ones you refer to anyways. Go see them if you want. You're a death god right?"

Izayoi gave his sarcastic retort as he sat up with difficulty. His abdomen and chest were swathed with bandages and even his hands were strapped and immobilized to wooden boards to act as splints. A slight movement of that body would surely be accompanied with an intense sensation of pain.

Needless to say, it is easy for Croix, himself, to disappear from the room, but knowing Izayoi and that strong determination of his, he would surely give chase without care of those injuries. And the deterioration of Izayoi's condition from the reopening of wounds was not something that Croix would wish to happen.

Seeming to give up on the idea of running, Croix shrugged his shoulders and touched the tip of his bowler hat, "Although the unicorn horn did help to preserve your life, I wish that you would continue to quietly rest for a little. ---Well then, is there a question for me?"

"There are some things that I need to ask you about but it isn't just one or two things. About the incident of [Ouroboros] three years ago, about the comrades of [No Name] and Canaria. And also about the relation between us, the trio who were summoned over from the other world. [Baron Croix], you are able to give the answer to all of them right?"

".....Hmph."

Okay..., Croix hesitated as he looked away to ponder his next step.

It wasn't all that difficult to answer Izayoi with the facts. After all, he was one of those involved in the decisions. And it was enough to reveal everything by giving away the clues to the riddle.

However, giving an easy answer was not something that sat well with the character of this death god.

"How should I do this. It's really easy for me to give you the answers to your questions, but I will require an equivalent price from you."

"Wha? Helping the [No Name] isn't counted as the payment?"

"Oi Oi, don't say those stuff that will only degrade your personal character. Being unable to stand by and watch the downfall of [No Name] is something that you have accepted on your part to help them out right?"

Izayoi lifted a brow at that. Truly, Izayoi's decision to help the [No Name] was based on his own judgement. Waving the card of having helped them before was only an act of seeking compensation for having done a good deed.

"Although I may say it that way, it is also a little unfair if I remain at status quo.Hmph. I will just answer a question for you then."

Giving a stomp of his foot, Croix watched Izayoi carefully while keeping his cane closely held under his hands. And following a glint in his all-knowing eyes, Croix laughed, "Summoning you guys wasn't for the sake of saving the [No Name]. The real reason lies elsewhere. You three were summoned over to Little Garden to complete that other aim."

"..... I guessed as much. If it were for the revival of [No Name], one of us would be sufficient to accomplish that job."

Although the time for their revival may be long or short depending on the calibre of the individuals, they only needed only one other for the revival of [No Name]. The accomplishment of getting the lands arable again and the defeat of two Demon Lords is already a huge war accomplishment that was completed within an astonishing time frame of half a year. And that is because all three of them were present.

But no matter how important one saw their Community to be, it would still unable to explain the reason for gathering three individuals with the highest order of Gifts bestowed upon the Human race together in one location.

Then, thinking it to be of another reason might be more logical.

"Then, what is it? To defeat the [Ouroboros]?"

"That's part of the reason. But you guys have another opponent to defeat before looking to the [Ouroboros]. I'm sure little Izayoi knows this clearly, right?"

Holding his bowler hat down, he peeled his lips back as he barked a laugh.

Izayoi narrowed his eyes to look to the window.

"[Last trial of Humanity (Last Embryo)] ---the Demon Lord of [Absolute Evil]. You will talk if we can defeat that guy?"

"Even if I don't want to, I will have to at that point. Surpassing (clearing) the final trial is one of your callings. The world of Little Garden would not have a future if he is undefeated. If you guys are able to defeat him..... I will tell everything to you guys."

To tell everything to us? Hearing those words, Izayoi narrowed his eyes that took on a glint of seriousness.

"Do remember what you have said today. And don't go swallowing those words that you have spoken, you Death god."^[5]

"Of course. Gods are unable to cast aside the promises that they have made with Humans. I will follow the promise to tell you from the start of what happened three years ago..... No, I will truthfully tell you about the incidences that led up to that point as well.

What exactly is [Ouroboros]?

Why the [No Name]s were destroyed?

The actual reason for the world of Little Garden's creation,

And why Sakamaki Izayoi , you would be chosen by Canaria. No, I think I should reveal that answer to you now."

"Guh," hearing the mention of Canaria's name, Izayoi shifted his position slightly. If the truth were to be heard from the person in question, there would be no need for this movement to prepare himself. But this god was a different matter. That was just the level of threat and alertness that he would credit to the truth that would be told by this god who held sway over lives and saw no difference in good or evil.

But Croix gave a fierce grin as he pretended not to notice the change in Izayoi's attitude, "Okay, so how should I start this? Firstly, oh right. We must start from the other [Final Trial of Humanity], one that is different from this three headed dragon---the story about the Dystopian Demon Lord."

"..... Dystopia? You mean, dystopia of the dystopian literature?"

"That's right. Everything started from how that guy caused Little Garden..... No, from how he locked the history of the Human race into 'the world of Little Garden' itself."

Tapping the tip of his cane on the ground, the sagacious god started his recount.

Following that, Izayoi was suddenly assaulted with the urge to sleep. Though it was fairly easy to defeat it there and then, Izayoi chose to face the assault head-on.

And he will soon learn about the tracks left behind by Canaria, his adoptive mother.

And the fate which will be borne upon the back of the youth called Sakamaki Izayoi.

Chapter 5

Part1

—North Side. In an unexplored section of the forest.

This is a quiet place. That was the first impression Asuka had about the forest.

The only sounds that could be heard in the forest were that of rustling of the trees as wild birds roosted on the branches. And the light footed gallop of wild beasts on the moist ground as the herds passed them by.

Various calls and howls echoed in the night while Asuka started the fire that would warm their campsite.

“It’s really quiet here. It might actually be the first time that I’ve heard this kind of silence in Little Garden.”

“.....” Kuro Usagi hunched over the fire and did not respond to Asuka. Hugging her knees, Kuro Usagi had been lost in her thoughts for hours and it would have been an uninterrupted trance if it weren’t for the occasional act of tossing a kindling to the flames.

Although Asuka did not question directly nor was she supplied an answer about what was on Kuro Usagi’s mind, she guessed that it must have been the result of a traumatic experience in [Kouen City]. Moreover, Kuro Usagi had been in this state ever since she was rescued by Almathea.

Perhaps it was the desire to be in control of her own anxiety and wish to remain at status quo that made Asuka unwilling to ask the question. However, seeing that sort of behavior was also starting worrying. The usual Kuro Usagi would be the one who would play the role of the mood maker and boost their morales.

Thinking up to that point, Asuka shook her head to change her thoughts.

(Baka. Even if Kuro Usagi’s a cheerful and energetic person, it would be too cruel to depend on her to continue in her usual state at this point in time. It’s wrong for me to add on to her burdens when she has lost her usual drive. I’ve got to get my act together.)

Asuka pulled herself together as she decided that it is precisely in this dire situation that she should display the legendary “girl’s power”. Although she did not know the exact meaning of that phrase, but this Showa Era girl was just going to take that “girl’s power” to be an equivalent to the arts of a

skillful supporter— which refers to the supportive background role of a wife. And it was time for her to display her interpersonal communication skills which have been honed in the world of Little Garden.

Having set her mind to the task, Asuka then continued to engage in her random and unending flow of topics even while knowing that there would be no response to any of them.

Since the time that she was thrown to the surface of a lake upon being summoned to the world of Little Garden.

And the time that they had won against [Fores Garo] and proclaimed the plan to revive [No Name].

Then came the [Perseus], [Black Death Demon Lord] and battle of [Underwood] sagas.

..... Thinking back to those days, there was quite a number of battles within the past half year.

“Kuro Usagi, do you know what’s the most impressionable thing after our arrival in Little Garden?”

Having talked for some time, Asuka posed a question to Kuro Usagi to start a new topic.

She was unable to find anything else to talk about after having expended most of the topics in a short time span. After all, the definition of a conversation is a kind of interaction that is to be held between two individuals with an equal share of passing and catching of the ball. If it is only one individual who is passing the ball, it is only inevitable that the ball is lost in that process.

The sound of the rustling leaves in the forest and the chirps of the crickets and wild beast calls only helped to make the silence excessively prominent.

Behind the façade of Asuka’s smile were beads of cold sweat that soaked her back.

Kuro Usagi continued to hug her knees in silence before speaking softly.

“.....Asuka-san, have you regretted?”

“Regretted? About what?”

“About coming to Little Garden.”

—Don. Asuka’s eyes widened in surprise.

Kuro Usagi’s words were really unexpected.

But at the same time, Asuka was able to understand where it came from.

And what was bothering her.

"Kuro Usagi, could it be that ... something happened to Izayoi-kun?"

Hearing Asuka's question, Kuro Usagi started to break into a bout of shivers. And one would be able to guess from her reaction. It would most likely be the explanation for her silence as well.

Although Almathea had glossed over the whole matter, Izayoi must have sustained a heavy injury at that time. In addition, it might have been Almathea's way of showing her loyalty when she stopped Asuka from heading to his location.

"Kuro Usagi.....[No Name] changed a great deal because of you guys. Although it might be difficult to believe..... it was a building that used to have a thicker depressive atmosphere and it was truly a tiresome road that we had struggled to live up till today. Our few remaining comrades had also left us one after another because of the bitter and harsh life that we were leading. Among them were those who would even abandon their own children while leaving the Community."

Kuro Usagi continued to squat while hugging her knees and she spoke while avoiding a direct answer to Asuka's question.

It was the first time Asuka was hearing about the past.

Although the abandonment was only to be expected if one were to take into account the culture of Little Garden.

Large scale Communities were mainly dependent on the hosting of Games for their earnings. Opening businesses and such were only a supplementary source of income.

No matter how one were to think about their shared times in the Community, it was a fact that a Community that has lost its Flag (symbol) and Name (brand) would be unable to host Games anymore. And there were almost none who would be willing to remain in a Community that was given a fate similar to that of a death sentence.

Those who left to protect their families and those who left while abandoning their families.

The three years spent in their condition of ruination was surely the hellish days of the [No Name].

"Kuro Usagi wasn't planning to insult those who left us. After all, it is a very common thing in Little Garden. Rather, the laughable one would be Kuro Usagi. Thinking that they would stay on if we were to hold on and not announce the disbanding of our Community. If we were to establish a new

official Community— Everyone wouldn't have to be summoned over to such a useless Community. Izayoi-san wouldn't have to bet his life in that brutal battle."

Her last words were choked by a sob.

Hearing Kuro Usagi speak in such a feeble tone was totally unexpected and in stark contrast to her usual self. Asuka was stumped by the situation. Although she had known that something was bothering Kuro Usagi, she did not expect it to be such a degree of self-blame.

Asuka wanted to give a reflexive answer of "No, that's not it", but she caught herself before the words could come out. She could not think of anything to say to a person who was feeling cornered like this. And she speculated that Kuro Usagi would continue to blame herself even if she were to say anything different.¹¹

—Asuka did not know that Kuro Usagi had met with a similar situation 200 years ago and lost her parents in the process.

For the sake of letting Kuro Usagi escape, the view of the backs of her parents was too similar to that of Izayoi's. And it became the source of her fear and insecurity.

Her past that seemed to burn like the image of a setting sun was unable to be banished from her mind's eye.

Following that, their conversation broke off and was swallowed up by the silence of the region.

Only the sounds of the night wind brushing through the sea of trees could be heard and the campfire swayed unsteadily.

Are we going to wait like this until dawn breaks— Suddenly, Asuka broke the silence with a light tone,

"Just for a bit, let's talk about some unimportant stuff."

".....?"

"It's something that happened in my world. I've only talked about the rough sketches of the era that I've come from right?— Oh, let's start from my family and school."

Scratching her black hair, Asuka's smile faded from her face.



It was then that Kuro Usagi had a change of expression for the first time. Asuka had not brought up about her past as much when compared to Yō and Izayoi. Although Izayoi and Yō wouldn't initiate the topic, they would still oblige with a conversation if posed with the question. On the other hand, Asuka did bring up about the financial conglomerate and the original era that she was from, but there weren't any specifics about her homeland in all of her conversations.

Wondering to herself about her own change in mood, Kuro Usagi adopted the attitude of a quiet listener.

“Although I did bring it up myself, but where should I start this. I’ve recounted the part about entering a female dormitory before, did I?”

“Y, Yes.”

“Then let’s start from that. —Perhaps you may be surprised by this, but up till the age of ten years of age, I was still attending classes you know? Although there was a strict screening, but I was still able to make a few friends. The teachers trusted me and I did not have much friction with my relatives. My grades— was also excellent in the confines of that era. Hm Hm, that’s right. After all, I was the main successor of my family.”

Hehe, Asuka slightly puffed up her chest.

Due to her origin from the period after the Second World War, it was inevitable for her to be slightly less refined in her thoughts and knowledge, but that did not make her inferior in terms of cognitive capabilities. It must have been true that her grades would be excellent as well.

Having friends, being trusted and having a good relationship with her relatives, these would not be an exaggeration at all..... At least it was that way before the admission into the female dormitories.

“Just a little.... And it’s really just a little that there was a change to the attitudes of the people around me. I would feel the gazes that held a little doubt and even notice the gazes in the common bath that were filled with fear. At that time, I did feel a little curious about the trust and obliging attitudes of the people around me. But, I had taken pride in those while attributing the reactions to the good evaluations and trust that people had in me and paid them no mind.”

Kudou Asuka is a strong girl who possesses a sense of righteousness.

Faced with uncalled censure and impeachment, she would have used her reasoning attitude and talent in communicating to deny them. However, it was also impossible for her to push away all that pressure.

At that time, she was still a ten year old girl who did not know of the power of Gifts.

Even when the decision was made to place her far from her loved ones, she did not dwell on the thought or reject that idea.

"But even so, I will have to move on. Even if it is decided that I will be transferred to a location that seems like a quarantine zone, even if I were to be enrolled to a new school, I will also clench my fist just like that, ["For the sake of regaining my title as the most outstanding student! Let's be optimistic and gambatte!"]— I'd cheered myself on."

".....Hehheh, that sounds like Asuka-san."

Asuka desperately continued with conversational topics and Kuro Usagi responded with a little laugh.

Seeing Kuro Usagi's smile, Asuka suddenly hesitated as she considered whether or not to continue the story.

But thinking that "It would be meaningless to stop here before reaching the end", Asuka gave a troubled smile as she continued,

"Mah, getting myself pumped up with anticipation to enter a new school was only the start of that phase. The deep forest tracks were really inconvenient. The trails through the mountains were also winding along treacherous mountain paths and cliffs. The surroundings of the female dormitory were covered with a mix of soil types and mud. There would be frequent patrols carried out by armed guards and it was just like a prison in there."

"....."

"Having entered the female dormitory that required all tenants to seek permission for entering or leaving the premises, I remember it to be the first night there that it happened. While arranging my luggage and preparing to go to bed, the dormitory matron came running in and just when I was wondering what had happened, the dormitory matron spoke, ["Your friends have trespassed into the female dormitories covered in blood"], while looking pale in the face."

Kuro Usagi couldn't believe her ears. If her rabbit ears were still attached, they would surely be greatly tilted to a side. If the word friends was used in that occasion, it would mean that there were a few of them who had gone to look for Asuka.

Asuka had a self-deprecating smile as she gazed up to the skies.

"I had thought that it was all a joke back then. But those who arrived were unquestionably people whom I've known well. My best friends since my younger days. No. I should say that they were my bosom friends. And why would they come this far to the depths of the mountains? I then asked the reason..... and they absentmindedly said this,

[“Didn’t Asuka say this from before? We are best friends— so we must always be together.”]”

—Blood was flowing from her forehead.

Transversing the treacherous mountain paths

There was no doubt about that action.

The people whom I had thought of as bosom friends were saying that with a confused smile—

“At that moment..... even if it were me, I was able to understand everything. My words held the power to bend the wills of others. It’s just as the others had rumored about me..... I am a witch who befuddles the mind of others.”

Toward Asuka, whom she had always thought of as a person who was shy to bring up her past, Kuro Usagi was unable to say anything in reply.

And she was feeling ashamed of her smile that she gave lightly just a little while ago.

Although it was said that simply, but there would surely be a great change in the attitudes of the people around her. An impact and hopelessness that is far greater than what was described by Asuka was to be borne upon the back of a girl who was just ten years of age then.

Needless to say, the gazes of the people around her would be filled with distrust and fear. Betrayals in hope to wrest the inheritance would have had happened as well.

Otherwise, why would a talented girl who was a candidate for the inheritance in the Showa period, which had the culture of respecting men and looking upon women as supportive roles, be sent to a deep mountain isolated facility?

Just as it was mentioned earlier, Kudou Asuka is a strong girl who possesses a sense of righteousness.

And every time that she opened her mouth to speak what she felt was the right way of doing things, it would also unintentionally silence the opinions of the others. Twisting the other party’s will to her own. A girl who originally believed in her own purity and reasoning to life while proudly raising her chest, was mercilessly beaten down by the truth of reality.

The one who's truly at fault--- is me, I, a witch who befuddles the mind of others.

"Th,Then,..... What about those friends?"

"I've not seen them after that day. Although their minds were confused and scrambled up into many fragments, it would seem that their brainwashing was undone. They should be living normal lives from then on, I guess."

Then, what about Asuka-san? But she quickly shut her mouth before that question could escape her lips.

Noticing the unasked question, Asuka gave a stretch and continued, "After that, it's just been the same as how I'm now. I've been born with this character. Just a stumbling block in the way isn't going to change my whole life. I've decided that I will take my judgement of something to be right as a correct decision and that which I feel is wrong to be a wrong one. So, if I were to name something that might have changed..... It would be my inability to trust in the feelings of the people around me. That's just it."

In a world that calls for people to be forced to wear masks, shouting about righteousness and the correct way to things on her own. How did it become this situation? Even Don Quixote^[2] would be unable to compare to this level of ridiculous antics. On first glance, it might look like a comedy, but that was surely not a comedy.

Just like how righteousness would not be able to exist without the pairing of an evil intention, there is nothing in the world that is of a meaningless existence.

If that wasn't loneliness, what would that be? If that wasn't a tragedy, what would that be?

There had never been a need to be kept away in the prison of the mountains. Kudou Asuka had always been alone since her birth into the world.

".....Asuka-san, why are you telling Kuro Usagi all this?" Kuro Usagi asked cautiously. The story that Asuka recounted just now should have been one of her darkest histories that she would not want others to know of. Why would she choose to bring up a past that she had not said up till now? It was understandable that Kuro Usagi would have this doubt.

Asuka did not answer her immediately but lifted her head to gaze at the skies, temporarily sinking into silence.

At the moment when the moon's rays peaked from the edges of the clouds— Asuka stood up and gave a bright smile, “So Kuro Usagi. I'm really grateful that you've summoned me over to this world of Little Garden.”

Brighter than the stars and the moon, without any worry or embarrassment.

That was a real smile that reflected the soul of Asuka.

“.....Ah,”

Kuro Usagi finally remembered. And tears flowed from her eyes once more. To be swung along by the feelings of sadness and displaying a weak side of herself in the process of the recount, Asuka had accepted all of that. For the sake of Kuro Usagi and to help her out of her self-blame and worry about the future, Asuka had made the decision to tell of her past humiliations.

— I'm really grateful that you've summoned me over to this world of Little Garden.

“cast aside your friends, your possessions, your world, and come to our Little Garden”.

To have sent me that wonderful letter filled with instigative intent, I'm really grateful to you.

That was a smile that was from the bottom of her heart, conveying the gratefulness for each and every day that she had spent in the world of Little Garden.

“Kuro, Kuro Usagi's the one who should say that.....Asuka-san, and everyone who answered my summon, Kuro Usagi have not even thanked you guys once.....! Kuro.... Ku,Kurob^[3], really..... !!!”

For it to be you guys who answered the call to Little Garden, it's the best thing that could happen.

Although she wanted to say that, but her tears and leaking nose was making it difficult to get the words out. Asuka gave a wry smile as she handed Kuro Usagi a handkerchief.

“Izayoi-kun is surely okay. He's been doing fine up till today. So, he's surely going to be fine this time as well.”

“Y, Yes.....!”

“Who care's if he's the strongest Godslayer or what. He won't be our match at all. Let's quickly beat that guy to his knees and return to our Headquarters with everyone. Jin-chan's name is also well established by now and it shouldn't be a bad idea to try host a Game of our own. Right?”

“Yes..... Yes.....!!!”

They would definitely return with everyone. No matter how strong their opponent may be, they would still return with everyone alive and well. With each encouragement spoken by Asuka, Kuro Usagi could feel the warming of her heart’s fire.

And this warmth is definitely not the work of a witch’s curse. For if this warmth in her heart were to be a curse, all Gifts in the world would also be a curse.

Wiping away her tears, Kuro Usagi was brimming with smiles when she turned to face Asuka.

And she saw their hopelessness that lurked in the shadows of the undergrowth.

“Asuka-san, get down!!!”

Pulling her clothes forcefully to get Asuka to lie low.

Asuka was bewildered by the sudden change in Kuro Usagi but she soon understood the reason behind such an action in the next moment.

An impressive intimidating presence flew over their heads. If Asuka had remained standing, she would have been gnawed in half and probably would have her organs spilled over their camp grounds too.

The attacker —a pure white two headed dragon, had a glint of reflected light in its ruby red eye as it flew overhead while giving a roar.

“GEEEEYAAAaaa!!!”

“Here.....! Until we escape, obstruct that two headed dragon!”

Waving the only Gift on hand—the [Hamelin Wind Cutter Flute], she endowed a mock Divinity upon the trees as she gave her orders.

Following that, trees started to stretch and roil the grounds like an agitated animal.

Twigs were transformed into arrow heads and the tree branches changed into hundreds of spears as they pierced the four limbs of the two headed dragon. It did not matter that they were just normal trees as trees that were given mock Divinity would possess a strength that exceeded that of any normal weapons.

But as a price for power, the trees would start to wither at a rapid rate after accomplishing their mission. After all, this was a different situation from how Asuka gradually sanctified the land itself to become a holy temple ground in the previous encounter.

And as the trees burnt their spiritual powers with the conferred mock divinity, they were instantly reduced to withered logs that crumbled away.

A fresh spurt of blood of the two headed dragon was followed by its roar.

And from the blood that was splattered around it, more one headed dragons were being produced and were multiplying gradually. If it were only one enemy after us, we might just be able to escape, thinking that to herself, Asuka took a step forward

But Kuro Usagi's shout brought her attention to her back, "Asuka-san! There's still another enemy concealed in the trees!"^[4]

Possessing a body of a burning temperature, the two headed dragon lunged at Asuka who was unguarded. However, the water tree branch which was their ration supply was given a command which it accepted along with the endowment of mock divinity to form a protective blast of water which shielded Asuka.

Intense heat collided with flowing water to form steam that blanketed the surroundings. Effectively blocking them from sight.

"Let's run!" Asuka saw it as an excellent opportunity and pulled Kuro Usagi by the hand to break into a run.

"But, But where do we escape to?!"

"If the two headed dragon can find us here, this location should be close to [Kouen City]! If we can meet up with Almathea, we might have a chance to be saved!"

They could only leave it to the heavens to dictate their fates. And fortunately, there were the burnt tracks of the heated two headed dragon from its travel in the forest. If they were to retrace the tracks of its passage, it might just lead them back.

"Definitely.... We will definitely make it back alive.....!!!"

It won't end like this, it will not end in this sort of place. It will definitely not end like this.

They cannot leave behind the Senior group just like that.

When they have not even restored the Flag.

When they have not even return the Name.

When they have not even defeated the Demon Lord whom they needed to exact vengeance upon.

And when they have not hosted a Halloween event.

How could we die like that when we have not even accomplish a single task?

Asuka ran with all her might.

However, all those were not even worth mentioning when placed before the problem of the two headed dragon.

“GEEEYAAAaaa!!!”

The shroud of steam was instantly dispersed by the intensity of its roar. The pressure of the winds caught Askua and Kuro Usagi in the process and tossed them up like leaves in the wind.

And up they flew to tumble over the tree tops while struggling like worms caught in a gust.

Asuka had been protected all those times by Almathea's iron strong defence, but with just a human body alone, a simple breath of a god would be enough to snuff out the life in her.

Having collided her head on the third tree top, Aska's vision started to swim as she gradually sank into a concussion. But even then, she continued to show her will to fight.

However, the fiery breath was already close in before Asuka's very eyes.

“.....”

The approaching ball of fire that seemed like a miniature sun elicited a shiver in her.

Even in her hazy semi-consciousness, Asuka was able to understand the implications.

Tears of regret and anger wetted the rims of her eyes as she couldn't accept the death that she judged to be imminent.

“Ah.... Asuka-san!!!”

Kuro Usagi rushed over to Asuka and the twin headed dragon.

Her body was equally battered to the point of inducing a bout of nausea, but she ignored her condition to rush forth. Perhaps it might be evident that it is a useless attempt to be together but she continued to rush over with that understanding in mind.

Just like in the distant past—where the [Moon Rabbit] sacrificed its life in the Buddhist stories.

For the sake of protecting her important comrade, Kuro Usagi charged into the blaze.

Part 2

—[Kouen City]. In an adjacent part of the forest.

Rin, and the others who were in a desperate situation of fighting against the steel angels, noticed the rise of a fire pillar in the depths of the forest and understood that there was a fight with a two headed dragon going on near them.

While throwing her last dagger in her hand, Rin gave a loud click of her tongue.

“Who’s that fighting with the two headed dragon.....?!”

The echoing scream and rise of the fire pillar caught their attention and the steel angel did not allow this opening to slip it by. Instantly using a teleportation to close the distance between them, the steel angel swung its sword down on Rin.

But that large sword would never be able to reach Rin.

The Gift that allowed her to manipulate distances is one of the strongest Gifts for defence. That is because the ability to manipulate distances would allow her to be in control of the target’s speed and hence the time of the strike.

Suddenly losing its speed, the large sword continued in its heavy trajectory to chop at a vacated spot. This opening was then targeted by Demon King of Confusion’s Dragon flare and Aura’s harp.

“Match my attack, babaa^[5]!!”

“Hey, who are you calling babaa!!”

Anger flared within Aura’s eyes as she knitted her brows while plucking away on her golden clarsach. And following the plucking of the clarsach, which held divine power from the Celtic mythologies to control weather conditions, thunder was summoned to rain upon and pierced the steel angel.

Enveloped in a blast from the combination of fire and lightning, the outer steel armour was shattered by the attacks. However it was clear that their attacks were ineffective when the damaged portions started regenerating at a rapid rate.

“Tch, just a puppet but it’s still a divine being?! Oi Oi, what do we do now?! Rin-chan, it’s impossible to bring that down with our firepower!”

“I already know that! But if only we could find out the origin of its mythology.....!”

No matter how strong the spiritual power of the third perpetual machine was, it wouldn't be able to create a whole mythological faction on its own. Although it had the outer appearance and structure of this unknown angel, there was no doubt that it would have a core spiritual power that belonged to a mythological faction that was loaning it power. After all, the ones who were in [Ouroboros] weren't only Demon Lords.

(Who can it be.....?! Who is it who could have loaned this spiritual power to Maxwell?! No, that's not it, it should be a question of who is able to loan to Maxwell?!)

When talking about angels, the initial association that most people would have would be the divine beings recorded within the Bible. However, in reality, there were many various types of divine beings that were called angels, such as those of cupids and more.

Examples from The Old Testament and New Testament Bibles and even those from the Greek and Roman mythologies would add up to quite a sum.

(A mythology faction that has allied with [Ouroboros] and possessing a divine being related to the third perpetual motion machine..... Or perhaps it could be a financial conglomerate that invested in the creation of the third perpetual motion machine with the use of another mythological faction's flag? What happens if I were to follow that line of thought.....?!)

The Greek mythological faction of [Kerykeion] was an example of that. They loaned out their Flag to a school of finance and business set in the 1900s to 2000s CE. Almathea also loaned out her name of the Aegis system to increase her spiritual power.

However, if that knowledge was to be key to the riddle, it would far exceed the realms of Rin's knowledge.

(To completely defeat this guy, we will require knowledge about the organization or financial organization that backs up this third perpetual motion machine! Is it 2000 years later or is it from a person of a much further future?)

Rin rapidly ran through the possibilities and in that instant, she was struck by an intense light from her back.

“Yaah!?”

A loud peal of thunder shook the skies. But that wasn't the lightning of Aura's harp. It was a blindingly bright continuous streak of lightning that shot from the ground to reach the heavens, illuminating the night sky.

It was definitely a lightning that did not originate from the ground. Jin, who was curious about that development, observed from the back of Graiya. And noted that the stunning light from the thunder originated from within the pillar of fire.

“Lightning.....?”

But lightning wasn’t a Gift that could be conferred to any normal strong people. Just like how its phonics sounded like that of a “God’s calling”^[6], it is a Gift that is only reserved as the powers of Sky gods or even that of elder god tiers.

In the short span of time that he pondered over the identity of the caster, the lightning continued to intensify in brightness and burned away at the forest.

Even Jin and the others who were far from the epicenter of that phenomenon were being washed by the flare of light and they stopped in their tracks. Even Aura’s lightning from just a little while ago was incomparable to this. The streaks of lightning were tireless in their increasing intensity and might as they danced while seemingly intent on setting fire to the entire forest.

Watching the intense lightning that seemed to inspire life in itself, Jin widened his eyes and sucked in a cold breath of air.

“Could it be that She.....!?”

There was only one person whom Jin knew as an existence who could use lightning to this extent.

In the instant that the intense lightning ravaged the surrounding region—the caster, appeared with hell itself.

Part 3

Kuro Usagi felt her limbs burning and wasting away as she was swallowed by the fiery breath.

What continued to burn wasn’t only limited to her limbs.

The morrow filled with hopes that she had just glimpsed upon earlier.

The happy days that they had in their Community.

The paths that the problem children of the other world had taken were also burning up like illusions in the face of reality.

It was all a daydream of a powerless fool. Depending on their kindness, roping them into situations where they would take on the role of defeating enemies when the situation of “having enemies that require defeating” arose and even to the extent of placing them on the path of their downfall.

They should never have been summoned to Little Garden.

We should never have met each other.

Even at a critical time, being one who is known as an aristocrat of Little Garden, she was still unable to do anything. Wouldn’t that suggest that she had been blinded by the radiance of their talents and promising futures that she allowed herself to neglect her duties and enjoy those times in play?

A torrent of regret, her words of gratitude and apologies would never be able to reach them now.

In the instant when she was to be burnt entirely in the flames along with all her regrets.

An earth-shaking thunder that rocked the heavens, echoed in the night sky. Resembling the mark of dawn of an apocalypse.

(.....?!)

Following the radiance of the seven coloured rays, the boundaries of life and death rushed to greet her eyes. In the instant that her body was to be completely incinerated— in a distance, an image of the past came into her field of sight.

“.....”

The wide expanse of blue Earth was overhead. An uninhabitable grey landscape and a volcano vent stood to her left and right. It did not take long for her to understand that this was the surface of the moon.

And it looked like there was a huge battle on the moon surface.

Flags that seemed to be emblazoned with the symbol of Buddhism and those emblazoned with the symbol of [惡] similar to that of the flag on the three headed dragon were scattered around [The Moon Palace (Chandra Mahal)]. However, the one who wore that flag wasn’t a three headed dragon.

Hugging the corpse of a Chandra (Moon God) Magi female of the rabbit race was a warrior whose face was streaked with tears.

Although his body was bleeding from the many cuts and expended all his arrows and broken all his blades in battle, he cared not about those details.

Instead, he continued to hug the corpse tightly as he gave a sob that sounded like a roar in dejection.

—Why, did you protect me?

This body is one that is born to be an evil god anyway.

To be defeated by someone, is the fate of a Demon Lord—!

That pained cry and torrential tears were enough to tell KuroUsagi about the identity of this warrior.

A person who used to carry the same flag of [惡] as Azi Dahaka of the Zoroastrianism to be unable to stand under the same skies beside Order itself, and is now known to be the leader of benevolent gods.

Taking joy in wine, women and battle while being a divine being who loved the kindness in human nature.

The warrior god. [Indra].

Tossing aside any feelings of shame, embarrassment and pride, that figure was one that did not seem to belong to an evil god or Demon Lord as he continued to sob while hugging that female corpse in a tender and pitiful fashion. And from the situation where he sobbed over the passing of a life in battle, it was already unbecoming to count him as a divine being. That small figure was already similar to that of an insignificant mortal.

(This rabbit race Magi..... could it be.....?)

In the final battle between the Buddhist faction and Indra, having protected him, was a young rabbit female who lost her life like a wavering illusion before his very eyes. He, who had planned to be a Demon Lord and was about to be punished. Her body was so thoroughly burnt by the hell-like flames that it was charred and gradually disintegrating.

Although wounds had riddled her body, there was still a satisfied smile on the lips of this female Magi even after her death. That peaceful look on her face was one that told of her feelings of satisfaction from having protected her beloved to the end.

Sacrificing everything about herself, to become the rabbit girl who would change the fate of the evil god.

The tragedy before her was undoubtedly the truth behind the story of the [Moon Rabbit] and Kuro Usagi understood that even in the midst of her burning heat.

(My patron god..... and my ancestor.....!)

And just like a sign of respect to the figure of her distant ancestor, KuroUsagi poured her pride into her soul.

Although she might have lost her spiritual power and lost her Gifts, she had yet to lose the pride of a [Moon Rabbit]. The chains of regret from the incident 200 hundred years ago might have held her down and perhaps it was the unbearable pain of the downfall three years prior that added to her baggage. If now wasn't the time to get rid of all those feelings, when else would there be time for her to do so? Even if she were to descend to hell, even if her body would be burnt entirely by purgatory flames, if she were to be unable to guard her comrades to the end as well, she would really die an unrestful death.

—*Thank you. Someone had said that to Kuro Usagi who only knew how to rely on others.*

— We are comrades. Someone had happily said that to Kuro Usagi.

—We are here to save you. Someone had said that while pulling Kuro Usagi's hand up till today.

So, it will not end.

It will not end like this.

This time, Kuro Usagi must protect them well!!

Even if it results in death, it is a death for the sake of comrades. Please light up the flame of my soul now, let it burn.....!!!

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhh——!!!”

Following last scream at the brink of death by immolation—Kuro Usagi simultaneously screamed in her rebirth.

Her limbs that were burnt away moments ago were regenerated with the accompanying lightning and her cardinal red hair transformed into a red lightning that blasted away the heat from her body. And from her head, the symbolic Usagimimi of Kuro Usagi appeared once more.

Donning the ceremonial robes made with the techniques of the Age of Gods and surrounded with peals of thunder that shouted the presence of the caster to the gods of heaven and earth

It is not that Kuro Usagi's spiritual power returned.

But it was the manifestation of a [Moon Rabbit]'s inheritance. A new form of Kuro Usagi who overcame death to be reborn.

“Kuro, Kuro Usagi.....?!”

Although most of her attention was riveted by the sight before her very eyes, she was still able to comprehend with a speculation on what might have happened in Kuro Usagi's body.

The holy inscriptions of Indra surfaced on the skin of Kuro Usagi's forehead. Although it was incomparable to Asuka's power, it was undoubtedly the proof of Divinity.

Her spirit of self-sacrifice for the sake of her comrade had led to the housing of Indra's Divinity in her body.

"Prepare yourself, two headed dragon!"¹⁷

Kuro Usagi, who was covered in the indescribable amount of electricity that coursed through her body in the form of divine thunder, stood before the two headed dragon

The Vajra which was supposed to be destroyed was enveloped by a blue streak of lightning at its tip and it grew itself a new spear, calling forth a clap of thunder in Kuro Usagi's hands.

The two headed dragon gave another fierce roar to cough out another blast of fire but instead of dodging, Kuro Usagi merely charged straight into it. Having received the Divinity of Indra, Kuro Usagi, who originally had a power that was close to a divine spirit level, was now several times mightier than her previous self.

With just the electric currents coursing around her body, it reflected the blast of the two headed dragon aside while enabling Kuro Usagi to chop the two headed dragon cleanly in half.

"GEEEEYAAAaaa!!!"

The corpse of the two headed dragon was burnt to become a charred lump.

But there was more than one enemy.

A pure white two headed dragon instantly approached Kuro Usagi, slipping behind to her back with its high level of agility and slashing down with its vicious claw. However, Kuro Usagi made the quick decision to switch her weapon to the other arm to rotate the spear shaft and deflect the claw beautifully like the movements of flowing water. Maneuvering it skillfully like how one would skim the top of the clouds, Kuro Usagi brought her spear back up to chop off a head from the two headed dragon with the blade.

Fresh blood spurted from the wound like a fountain and sloshed into the forest.

Immediately, the spilled blood transformed into many large snakes and crocodiles that lunged towards Kuro Usagi.

Numbering more than a few dozens of them.

Such large numbers of venomous and vicious animals were raining down from above that one would have thought it to be an insane spectacle. A rain of venomous fangs which would either reduce a target into nothingness or leave no trace of their bones within seconds. However, all that were charred by the red lightning released by Kuro Usagi.

“Incredible.....! But, that Divinity.....!!!”

Although Asuka was immature about those matters, she was also able to guess as much. The power that coursed within Kuro Usagi was not Divinity. It was a pseudo-Divinity. Although the power that it granted to the user was much different in terms of the magnitude, it was still under the same classification of the Gift system that Asuka uses.

A pseudo-Divinity is a double edged sword that shaved away at the user's lifespan.

Kuro Usagi was currently burning her life to engage in the battle.

“That's enough.....! It's enough, Kuro Usagi! So, just run! Your current condition would allow you to escape!”

Her entire body's bones and muscle sinews were creaking and her clothes had already transformed into a blaze that covered her charred body. Even then, Kuro Usagi did not stop fighting. Although the two headed dragon had lost a head and was hence weakened with a severe injury, it was still plenty strong to finish off Asuka.

Even if this body were to be burnt completely, she would not stop her fight in this place.

“.....Guh, Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhh!!!”

Must not retreat. Must not retreat!

Must never retreat!!

Retreating would mean the death of her comrade.

(Oh my patron god.....! Please confer your Gift to Kuro Usagi.....!!!)

Summoning another two, three and up to four Vajras that aimed toward the two headed dragon.

At the instant when she gave the command for them to strike, the two headed dragon seemed to throw it all into a gamble.

“GEEEYAAAaaa!!!”

Targeting the split second that the Vajras would be launched toward it, the two headed dragon made a sudden attack in its gamble. It would die if it were to be struck by those spears and that degree of having accepted the inevitability to put it all into a gamble was a level higher than that of Kuro Usagi's.

In a melee battle, those Vajras that were transforming into long spears would be of a disadvantage. The pure white two headed dragon was without an element of its own and its strength was much higher than that of any other two headed dragon types. Kuro Usagi and the two headed dragon then switched into a super high speed battle which raced along the top of the forest to display a blur of melee engagements and disengagements.

As the both of them left the forest to move closer to the open area, Jin's exclamation travelled over to them.

“Kuro, Kuro Usagi! As I thought, that lightning was from Kuro Usagi?!”

Kuro Usagi, who was in the midst of battle, did not reply to his question.

Currently, her entire brain was focused in the heat of battle and she could not hear anything else.

The one who responded to their fierce fight was the steel angel instead.

“La.....Ra.....!!”

The steel angel made a sound for the first time and swung its huge sword down on Kuro Usagi. However with the usagimimi back on her head, Kuro Usagi's ability to receive and collect information was overwhelmingly competent for this. At this current state, it is basically useless to even attempt a sneak attack from 100m around her as it was the radius of her information collection. Turning to avoid the attack from behind, Kuro Usagi confirmed the alignment of her enemies to be in a direct line of fire while pulling out a card.

“Summon [Brahmastra Replica]—!!”

With the resounding clap of thunder, the Victory spear materialized in her hand. With her holy garments of the era of gods burnt to the extent that it was currently, it would seem that this would also be her very last attack.

And mustering her might with an intensity that would pierce the Earth, the Heavens and shatter the stars, Kuro Usagi shouted,

“PIERCE ‘EEMMMMMMMMM—!!”

The tip of the holy spear gave off an unprecedented spiritual pressure as the rays of the Sun were infused within it— be launched at the absurd speed of the sixth cosmic velocity^[8] to pierce the two headed dragon and the steel angel in succession.

A hundred streaks of lightning split into a thousand and a thousand into ten thousands to multiply up to the tens of millions before converging into a single entity to incinerate the two monsters into nothingness.

Never pausing in its unlimited barrage of attacks to achieve its goal of piercing its target, the spear emitted its last ray of sunlight to rip a line across the night skies.

And that overwhelming display of strength was enough to cause the members of [Ouroboros] to turn pale. Having engaged in a battle with the angel themselves, the fight was already beyond the realms of being unusual. Her combat prowess was already comparable to that of the strongest species. The forested lands were reduced to charred smoking regions by the collateral damage of the fight and it effectively rendered the lands inhabitable for any living beings.

Originally a dense forest before the war was now reduced to a flat land which stretched into the horizons. If it weren't for the destructive powers that were enough to destroy a city with each and every one of those Vajras summoned, it would not have reached such a state.

"This is the true power of the [Moon rabbit]..... [Aristocrat of Little Garden].....!"

As a member of the race who were granted the ability to judge the balance in the world and as a herald of the one who created the world of Little Garden.

Indra's holy inscriptions continued to shine from Kuro Usagi's forehead and she looked around to confirm the annihilation of her enemies. She then fell to the ground as all her strength sapped from her body.

".....Guh....."

It was then that Kuro Usagi noticed the abnormality.

The flames that covered her body did not seem to disappear even after the battle.

(Aah..... It really is, going to be like that, right.....)

Seemingly to accept what was to come next, the spear fell from her grasp.

This was the cost of the Gift. The end of the [Moon Rabbit]'s gamble at the cost of their life.

The rabbit, whose body had been burnt by flames, saved an old man—the reincarnation of Indra.

That is the legend of the [Moon Rabbit]s.

Offering her life in conjunction with her existence of being a symbol of sacrifice, she enacted the miracle of harboring the Gift of the Warrior God within herself.

And this blaze was a greeting from hell to collect the debt from Kuro Usagi.

Kuro Usagi's body was entirely covered in the blaze and that sensation of pain tightly clung to her body. However, there was no regret in her heart.

(My patron god.... I will be returning this life to you.)

Kneeling in the posture to thank her god for the miracle. There was no hate or regret in that action. It was a life that should have been ended a while earlier. To be able to grab such a miracle was already a fortunate thing in the unfortunate situation.

The purgatory would hasten her to the six paths, and that was where Kuro Usagi's consciousness ended.

And at the critical moment when the doors of the purgatory were to be opened— there came a figure that came rushing over without a care of the flames.

“No! Don’t die!”

In her tottering gait, Asuka reached out to the flaming Kuro Usagi. The purgatory flames would not burn the living. But the sensation of pain of being burnt was real.

Suppressing the pain that was similar to having her body immolated by the same flames, Asuka tearfully cried out.

“Go away! Go away!! Please, go away!!!”

Asuka commanded the purgatory flames to go away. But the blaze did not seem to be of the mind to go away. The purgatory flames seemed like a tsunami that continued to crash over them from the Hell of the six paths.

Although it was a flame that would not burn the living, if the gate of hells were to continue opening for them, Asuka would also be swallowed and lose her life in the process. Even if it weren't for that, the pain and strain on Asuka's body was continuing to increase and it would not be out of the question for her to die from the shock.^[9]

Even so, she would not give up, seeming to convey those very feelings of hers, a torrent of tears flowed from Asuka's eyes as she pleaded to the Heavens.

"Indra.....! If you really are a benevolent god! A god who seeks to stop the encroaching evils in the world! Then please save your herald who has faithfully followed in your teachings!!!"

Kuro Usagi has never veered from the path of good in her life.

Not forsaking her Community that has fallen into hardship and poverty, taking it upon herself to overcome the odds and living honestly and honorably up till now.

And that life was to end in such a tragic manner? Asuka could not allow that.

"As long as it can help her, I wouldn't mind standing in for her debt as well!! I too have prepared my resolve to be burnt by the purgatory flames!! If you can hear this wish of mine, I'm also willing to offer up everything of mine to the Heavens!! So.... I beg you.....!!!"

At the last parts, the crying voice did not manage to complete her words.

The purgatory flames separated into two like the upper and lower jaws of a huge monster and enveloped the two bodies.

Their bodies ravaged by flames, were about to be swallowed by the gates of hell, when...

Asuka heard the sound from the Heavens that was accompanied by a clap of thunder.

".....Ah....."

As if her wishes had been heard, thunder rumbled in the skies.

And in the brilliant streaks of lightning that came flashing like prongs of a trident in the skies, Asuka saw the gods for real.

The silhouette of the gods who stood within the lightning were similar to that of a wild beast and yet that of a human.

And the purgatory flames also disappeared shortly after to allow silence to return to the region.

Having lost her consciousness from the pain and anxiety, Asuka then collapsed on the ground amidst the wilderness.

Interlude 2

Recounting a past dream, it started with this line.

—*Do you not want to know?*

What lies behind the other side of this wall.

Saying those words to a young Canaria was a shadowy figure of a magical specter who wore the outlines of a swallow-tailed tuxedo.

Only existing in a two dimensional outline, the flat outline of the specter in a swallow-tailed tuxedo, would always lure or kidnap the young and old and both males and females alike. Trapping them in its city of residence and posing the same question to them.

The walls mentioned by the swallow-tailed tuxedo specter were the walls which divided the world of Little Garden into its North, South, East and West Sides. Standing at several thousand meters in height, they were the Boundary Walls of Little Garden.

Situated in the West Side, the Boundary Wall of that region did not have a door in its architectural construction. Well, that's not really right to say so, for it did have a door constructed into the wall if we were to speak of it accurately. But, it was a small metal door that was built into the wall at a height of several thousand meters above sea-level. If one wanted to leave the West Side to confirm the world on the other side with their own eyes, they would have to throw themselves into a magnificent journey.

However, of all the Humans who have been spirited away , none of them had thought about this question before and they only tilted their heads in puzzlement when they heard it for the first time.

It was not that they felt the challenge to be meaningless.

Nor did they not see the value of doing so.

Then, was it out of an inability to comprehend his words? That was not true as well.

But it was on a much more fundamental level that they did not catch the importance of his words.

" Why do you ask that sort of question?"

“—.....”

A reason that was given in a straightforward fashion.

The West Side that they were born into is their perfect homeland (Utopia).

A certain academic defined the word Utopia simply as such.

“It is a place where everyone obtains the average level of everything, have similar family structures while carrying a small amount of faith in their hearts as they peacefully spend their days together.”

If that is the definition of a utopia, the West Side would definitely be justified in being called a utopia.

Sparkling gems are seen to be of the same value as dull and dark colored rocks in their city.

Actualizing the concept of equality in all commodities, there had never been the concept of prices in their lives from the time of their birth.

Living on the land that provided for their every need, the concept of scarcity did not exist for them as well. Therefore, there was nothing that would nurture uniqueness within themselves or others. And without individuality, it also made fights meaningless. Hence, there are no losers nor are there victors. Unconsciously realizing the dream of equality in their society, they were also devoid of the concept of competition.

Hence, they were living blissful lives.

Objectively speaking, there might be a few inconveniences with that life.

The Veils of Little Garden were often covered by a cloud layer and the several thousand meters of the Boundary Wall that ran along the perimeter of their city prevented invaders and brain drain. The unusually small door was situated at the top of the exaggeratedly huge and towering Boundary Wall and the road that led to the door was more treacherous than the journey of the Archarya in training. It is the actual representation of the Little Garden (sandbox) that the world is named after. A complete bird cage.

But, they were living blissful lives.

Looking at it from another perspective, it was inevitable that the West Side would be deemed as a [Locked world (Dystopia)]. Without fights, without differences without harm, passing every year, every month, every day and every second like the same as they always do. It might just be that they do not know the meaning of misfortune as well.

So, they were living blissful lives.

And that was the only way to put it.

If there was no misfortune, there can only be bliss, right?

They who were born in this sort of place were without an exception, carrying no doubt about the way they lived, they would rather accept their blissful lives. For humans who have obtained the greatest level of satisfaction, seeking to understand the swallow tailed tuxedo spectre's words, which were flattered by a sense of underlying passion, is completely impossible.

— *What lies on the other side of the wall?*

Would you like to understand the feeling of being moved to the roots of your heart?

The swallow tailed spectre avoided using a direct confrontational pattern of speech. They, who do not know of a competitive world, would not know the meaning of a hypocrite. Hence, they would not suspect or have suspicious behavior. They would also have no need to seek for the truth behind the evaluation of his words.

This meant that —they were just livestock which were incapable of thought.

Given clothes, given houses and given fodder at the allocated timings.

Giving up on thought and living as a bag of meat.

And their produce (offering) would be faith.

Education in ideologies, knowledge that strayed from the right path and on the improvement of the Human race.

These were the most effective methods that were used by many religions. Having obtained great accomplishment of building the utopia attributed to their names, a majority of the mythological factions were welcoming to this bird cage. After all, that was the form of interaction that should exist between humans and god.

A utopia is an ideal form of relation between humans and god in the web of interdependencies.

When many of the god factions started to mutate in that space of a bird cage (system)—the swallow tailed spectre only left the words of “Don’t be absurd”, as he snorted at their behavior.

Betting his own bodily existence, the swallow-tailed spectre, who controlled the crossroads of life and death and lust, chided them.

— *To actually live without knowing of the sweet smell of cigar and the poison of its released puff?*

— *To actually do away with the joys of alcohol and the way to stand up from the drunkenness to continue one's life?*

— *To actually carry and give birth to life when you are unable to distinguish the difference between the presence and absence of love?*

Without the overwhelming sense of self love, there will never be the birth of an unconditional love. Hence, in the instant that this phenomenon was initiated by the god factions who decided to eradicate freedom and individuality, the swallow tailed spectre was unable to continue by their sides anymore.

The swallow tailed spectre—He, who should have been part of a god faction as well, was born to the period where slavery as a system was commonplace. Representing the freedom of slaves, he who revered the best taste of a cigar and rum as well as the wretched side of love, was also born to be one of the “closest divine spirit to humans” similar to Indra.

So, he would not agree with it.

He desired the rights for these humans and hence betted upon the glory, given to him by his beloved followers, as they were gradually treated as farm animals.

Knowing that it would be an overwhelming disadvantage to himself, he continued to steel his heart to fight against this fake utopia.

However, to the many other god factions, his concept of happiness was a taboo. An act of evil. Hence, even if he were born as a benevolent divine spirit, he was also branded with the mark of a Demon Lord.

Even though he was supposed to be the paradox to the definition of a Demon Lord..... but the god factions then were unanimous in their curses showered over his god faction. However, the swallow tailed spectre would not lower his flag of rebellion no matter what slanders were piled against him.

Insulted as a god of the evil cults.

Given the false title as the leader of all the dark arts.

It did not take long for a fourth of the world to become the farm that is called the utopia. Even when it was not far from the conclusion of the end of Human kind..... and even though he had long been chased to the point of being a paper-thin shadowy spectre, he never once gave up on them.

He who controlled the pathways of death and life, love and happiness, believed in the possibilities of the Human race the most.

If it were the Humans, they would surely overcome even tougher trials than this.

The ending for the Humans whom I love the most, should not be such an uninteresting conclusion.

The outlet of that belief that is similar to faith. It is the faith that Gods have in Humans. And this spectre understood that it is from that faith that will lead to a new possibility which will bring about change in the Human race.

So the swallow tailed spectre continued to believe. Or perhaps, it could be called a blind faith that he held.

If it were the world that held the endless possibilities called Little Garden, then there should be a chance to meet one even in this bird cage.

The possibility that stems from how the faiths of Humans have given birth to gods, should give rise to humans if the gods held that similar faith in them.

Then, there would definitely be an encounter. Surely, there would appear a human who would embody this hope.

Even if it might be just an act of searching for a gemstone in the sand dunes, the swallow tailed spectre did not give up. For he believed in the rightness of his dreams and the rightness of the faith of his scattered followers. Such was the unwavering belief that he fervently held onto—

And thus, he found the star in the sand dunes.

“—.....There is something beyond these walls?”

The young girl whom he had whisked from the settlements of the Utopia—was a girl who possessed a characteristic head of blonde hair that gave off a sweet smell as it was slightly wafted by the breeze. And it was she who answered his question with a question while tilting her cute little head without a hesitation to her voice.

There was just a sliver of feelings held in that voice.

Seemingly as though it were a rhetorical question that was echoed with a mechanical feel to it. Moreover, she was only just barely over ten years old.

At a height that was below the average, her hands clutched at a doll that fit her age. In the realm of a utopia where everything is supposed to be equal in value, this was already a deviation.

But to the swallow tailed spectre— her appearance was similar to that of a star.

And that was only inevitable.

Having spent several hundreds and thousands of months within this enclosed bird cage to ask the same question to humans who number as many as stars in the skies, it is truly an encounter that was a hard earned ray of hope. And that was what she represented.

“.....”

The impact of those words felt seemingly like lightning which jolted through his shadowy existence. The rims of his eyes which started to become wet was indeed an abnormality and the current him was grateful enough to give a kowtow of thanks to the ironic wheel of fate.

Divine spirits should probably not bring up the topic of fate and such that easily.

But in the world of Little Garden, where it was the period of time which the flow of world events were already fated to occur, a girl who possessed the possibility of saving the world had finally appeared. And this sort of overwhelmingly fortunate encounter could only be called an act of fate.

“.....The other side of this wall is—” However, he stopped before he could complete his sentence.

The swallow tailed spectre swallowed the words which he had planned to say before they were let out from his mouth. Although he might want to immediately welcome her as his own follower, he used all his self-control to swallow that desire. The god factions who joined the cause to fight against the [Locked World]—Utopia, was more than him alone.

The East was led by Indra, the twelve Adityas' and a mix of other god factions who were already in the midst of battle.

The South was inhabited by the god factions from the West and Europe who were patiently observing and waiting for an opportunity to strike.

The North was rumored to be led by a mix of Vampires, Bull Demon King, Shuten-doji, Tamamo-no-mae as they raised an army for the same cause.

Even with these many demons, gods and Buddhas in the fight, the battle did not seem to be turning for the batter.

It was just that the strongest god-slayer resided in the [Locked World]. Holding an absolute control over the authority to govern the West, it was the strongest armour against the attacks of the other god factions and a pressure against the followers of the other religions.

However, if there is an existence that can break through the armor from within—that would be the hope of all their efforts and she would be the star

of hope that shines the road before them all. Then, this treasure should be trained under the hands of all the other gods.

Holding back his desire to claim her for his own, the swallow tailed spectre giggled as his shadow waved along the wall.

“What could it be beyond the other side of this wall, eh? If you would like to find out, then use your legs to go confirm it for yourself.”

“Me, myself?”

“That’s right. That feeling of “wanting to know”, is simply unable to be quenched by the hearing of information from the mouth of another. That is something that you must use your own legs, your own eyes and your own soul to make the journey and to properly satisfy that desire to your heart’s fill.”

Even at this stage, would you still have the courage to challenge the bird cage?— the spectre smiled as it posed the question.

.....Although he might have thought that way, it would be for naught if she were to shake her head then. However, from her second response, it would seem that she was carrying a sort of self-determination when she replied with her second question.

Lifting her head to watch the swallow-tailed spectre—Canaria hesitated for a moment before making a definite first step forward.

This step would be the start to the long battle between the Humans and god factions and the strongest Demon Lord who locked the futures of the Human race— [The last trial of Humanity (Last Embryo)]. Demon Lord Dystopia.

A girl and spectre would then step onto the journey that would change the end of Human kind.

For the sake of creating a [Paradigm Shift] that would be observable within the world of Little Garden, Masters and disciples of many gods gathered together to place their efforts to lead the course of Human kind to a better direction.

The collisions between the two factions would escalate to a total of 80million sacrifices at times. And there would be times that they would feel regret for those results and feel disheartened.

However, they could not allow Little Garden to become a Human farmland and they would use that goal to encourage themselves from each setback to push onwards. The angels and god factions that were touched by their

vigour and determination would also gradually leave the [Locked World] to join her side.

And that would be the formation of the largest Community Alliance that connected the North, South and East sides.

The organization that preceded the fall to [No Name].

It was then known as [Arcadia].^[1]

With the concept of a different utopia from that of Dytopia's very own, they used that name to rally themselves. Believing in the day that they would unite the whole of Little Garden under this very Flag and Name.

Proudly raising the flag that depicted the lone girl who rose from the locked world to walk the lands and hills of freedom, it was their biggest accomplishment that occurred in the history of Little Garden.

The only human to completely break free from the [Final trial of humanity].

This is the life of the woman who believed in herself—Canaria's very own trail of life.

Epilogue

Part 1

—A few hours passed since the end of the battles in the sea of trees.

Roused by the warmth of a candlelight, KuroUsagi gradually regained her consciousness.

The rock hewn ceiling that suddenly greeted her eyes were unfamiliar to her and had the feel of a long history behind its creation. The North Side rarely utilised such rough building materials, especially for the city of [Kouen City]. Even if it were houses made from bricks, they would have much of its interior decked in beautiful decorum.

(.....*This is,... where am I?*)

Just as she wanted to get out of bed, she couldn't help but give a small moan before squatting to the ground. The sensation of pain that ran through her entire frame, bones and muscles told of the reality of her previous battles.

Her hands were swathed with bandages to treat her burns. Although it did not reach the point of restricting all movement, it was enough to prevent any fine motor skills for battles. It would then seem a better option to rest quietly for now.

She then turned her body to the extent that would allow her to rest without feeling the stabs of pain.

It was then that she suddenly noticed a nostalgic feeling on her head.

The protrusions which could move freely to the left and right. KuroUsagi, who confirmed the length and softness of the sensations, forgot all about her pain as she leapt in joy.

“Usagi.....Usagimimi?! Usagimimi? KuroUsagi’s beloved usagimimi?!! KuroUsagi’s lovely ears have returned-?!”

Uwa? KuroUsagi tugged at her Usagimimi while jumping around in joy.

KuroUsagi ignored the intense pain that accompanied the violent movements as her lovely well-groomed Usagimimi, which had been with her for exactly two hundred years, were back in their original positions. Despite the fatalistic sounds from her creaking bones, none of that mattered as she spun and bounced along the bed. In the meantime that KuroUsagi continued to use the recoil of the bed springs to bounce around, a surprised voice came from the area next to her bed.

“—Useless rabbit, you’re really noisy. I’m also severely injured. Just give me some peace will ya?”

That was a crude way of speech which stemmed from a foul mood. KuroUsagi halted her bouncing in surprise. The small room was fitted with two beds and the voice belonged to the other person who lay in the adjacent bed.

“Mah, our luck is quite bad this time. If it weren’t for the help from others, we would surely be dead by now. Oh well, I guess this must be the result of our accumulated karma.”

Ahaha, the voice was tingled with a slight weariness.

But all that did not matter to KuroUsagi in the other bed.

Widening her eyes in a daze, KuroUsagi shook her head in disbelief. And there on the bed was KuroUsagi's comrade, whom she had thought she would never have the chance to meet again, wearing that usual smile while lightly rolling around on the bed.

KuroUsagi had tears shining in her eyes as she leaped towards Izayoi.



“Ish.... Issahyoui-shan....!!”

“Oi! Who’s Issahyoui-shan. Wipe your tears and snot before talking will ya?”

Taken aback by that teary face, Izayoi handed her some tissues.

And KuroUsagi, who wiped her snot, returned with her second attempt and her usagimimi were perked in joy.

Izayoi smiled as he returned the hug lightly while laughing in his usual style.

“Ooh, Ooh, I’ve struck the jackpot, the jackpot. It’s such a great thing to be alive.” [magrefnotes: I’m wondering if it is too literal a translation... perhaps I should use “this feels great, this really” feels great instead of “I’ve struck the jackpot, the jackpot” if you wonder about what this means... hmm remember KuroUagi’s description in terms of her texture...?]

“You’re still saying those stupid stuff as usual.....! But it sure is great that you are alright.....!!”

*0ge’k “I guess you’re right on that. We were quite lucky this time. Jack, Kouryuu, Sala and Coppelia arrived on time and even that masked knight=sama have arrived to represent the Queen’s Knights in the battle. It’s like everyone we know have gathered in this place.”

The path that Izayoi and the others had forged in the world of Little Garden was now in fruition and not for naught. The accumulation of their daily accomplishments and the help that they had given along the way were now returning to aid them in their time of need.

KuroUsagi, who was done with her tears and regained her composure, then frantically backed away in her slight embarrassment and cocked her head slightly to ask, “But, where’s this place? Who was it who saved KurUsagi and Asuka-san?”.

“Aah, that’s—”

“That KuroUsagi, would be me.”

And as the gentleman in a tuxedo appeared without any warning before them, KuroUsagi’s usagimimi perked up as she exclaimed in surprise.

“Co, Co, Croix-sama?! Aie, what?! Why would you be here?!”

“Hahaha. As expected of my precious, to be able to recognise me with just a glance. I’m sure glad to see that you have grown to be such a cute beauty. Although it sure is a pity that I wasn’t able to witness the instant of your growth.”

KuroUsagi ignored the teasing of Croix as she waited for the answer to her questions. After all, those three years of being teased by Shiroyasha were not all for naught.

Noting that his attempt at harassment was not receiving any results, Croix’s shoulders slumped down as he pressed down on his bowler hat before answering.

“Mah, I was just sent to the outer world for a slight while. I’ve been staying in the other world till the European calendar of 2065 CE..... wandering around for about 1500 years or so?”

“What did you just say?!”

KuroUsagi's usagimimi perked in surprise. To which Croix was very satisfied by her reaction as he gave a twirl of his staff to laugh jovially.

“Although there was an opportunity for my return after the 1700s, it was still fairly difficult to pin point an exact time of return for my re-entry into Little Garden from the flow of time in the outer world. I could only look for a better gamble on a method which would give me a surer accuracy in returning to the time that I wanted to be. However, there was still a 3 year gap as a result of the deviation. It must have been hard for you and I sincerely apologize for that. It's really fortunate that you were able to protect our Community. You have my heartfelt thanks, my comrade.”

He nodded his thanks while holding down his bowler hat. Seemingly in an attempt to hide his embarrassment.

However, being given such a formal thank you by the founder of the Community, he who was of a heavy weight individual in the decision makings, it was causing KuroUsagi, who was only a junior member in the original Community to squirm in discomfort.

“Although I would like to talk a little more, but there isn't much time left. We are still protected by the Game rules for now, but it is only a matter of time that they will be broken. We are going to convene the conference for the plans to take down Azi Dahaka and I'm here to fetch little-Izayoi over. KuroUsagi, you can continue to rest up for now.”

“Al, Alright. Please be safe.”

“Aoh. We'll be back when the plans are done.”

Izayoi and Croix left the room while KuroUsagi sent them off with her eyes.

The duo made their way towards the great hall for the conference which they walked along the path from the private villa to the main castle of the floating citadel in silence. Izayoi, upon confirming their distance after leaving the villa, turned on Croix with a clear hostile stare in his eyes.

“.....Oi, what’s that about?”

“What do you mean?”

“Drop the act. The one who brought back KuroUsagi and Ojou-sama wasn’t that Kasukabe’s father?”

Why did you lie, Izayoi chided.

It was just as he said. The one who brought back KuroUsagi and Asuka to the floating citadel wasn’t Croix.

It was the mysterious man named Kasukabe Koumei who looked like one of the former members of [No Name], who brought KuroUsagi and Asuka into this Game field.

“And I heard from Ojou-sama that you guys actually let off the people from [Ouroboros]. What’s up with this? I don’t care if you try to lie or hide it, but if you do not have a good reason for these things, I will not be willing to accept and go along with it.”

“.....Hmmh, It sure is the case.” Croix continued to walk briskly.

“Regarding all those things, it still isn’t the time for me to tell you about the reasons. I hope that you will just accept it as it is for now. This is the responsibility of that cowardly father. If you have any dissatisfaction with his actions, then go and tell it to him.”

“..... a coward, is it so.”

“Aah. Moreover, the decision to let the [Ouroboros] people off the hook is the instructions of the current [No Name] leader-sama. Just my perspective alone will not be able to overturn it right?”

“The instruction of ochibi-sama? Wait, where is he now?”

“Together with the Origin candidate of [Ouroboros]. And it looks like things are going to get interesting.”

Wha?! Izyaoi couldn’t help it as he exclaimed in surprise. It was surely a development that was out of his calculations. Although he did want to have the opportunity to hold negotiations with His Highness and company, but Jin’s lone actions were out of his imaginations.

Croix suppressed his mirth as he pressed down his bowler hat to continue.

“Aiya, looks like that child of the Treasurer have really grown. For the son of that useless father, it sure is great to see him being that much more capable in his abilities. After all that guy was with such a pilfering hand.”

“You have known Jin’s father?”

“Aah. He was the guard of our Treasury. A classic example of a useless person who had stolen from our treasury a couple of times to indulge in his

drinking habit. He would then be caught and tied up to the roof by his wife or Canaria. But, what makes it all the more conflicting would be his knowledge to tell good wine from the rest. As such, I've some good memories of him. Moreover, he's quite a fellow who has a curious sense of morals. He would even be able to get his hands on the wines, hidden by the bartender for the exclusive offerings to the gods, back to our Community. He sure is a guy that you wouldn't be able to hate in earnest."

"Heh? That sure is unexpected."

"Aah. But even if I did describe that much about him, he still died in the battle three years ago to protect his comrades. Until today, thinking about him sure makes me feel that it's such a pity that he has left us so early."

The facial expression of this reminiscing guy with a slight smile was a calm and serene look.

That expression and atmosphere was one that Izayoi would never have expected to come from his impressions of Croix. Perhaps this was the expression that was the core of this guy who was known to be a benevolent god.

"The tragedy of the setting sun is one that will not be wiped out from our minds. Just like the loss of a person's life, the pain of such a loss is one that will never be gone from our chests."

"..... that sure doesn't sound like the words fit for a Grim Reaper. You are able to resurrect the dead right? During the battle with Dystopia, wouldn't you have done"

"How could I've done that? There are very few methods to resurrect the dead completely. The most that I can do is to transform a dead body into

a new lifeform. That sort of mutation isn't of my interest to engage in. Moreover it's my comrades whom I would grieve for their loss who died in a battle to complete their calling. How could I commit such a blasphemous act on them?"

Baron Croix gave a troubled smile.

Izayoi was reminded once more that this man was also a divine being.

"Mah, that sort of thing will not happen again. Let's just leave the records of your failures to three years ago and no further."

"I hope so too. I wouldn't want to continue with the bearing of such pain again. May you people win no matter what comes in your way."

Saying such things lightly as they returned to the castle. However, he had already steeled himself for the worst.

For the number who would be able to return from this battle alive would surely be not more than a small portion.

Part 2

On the other side, at the same time.

Having suffered only a slight bump, Asuka was asked to wait in another conference room. However, rather than calling this gathering location a conference room, it was more apt to describe it as a concert hall or a theatre.

(The only empty room available would be this place and the reason should be more than just that. The arrangement of the seats are clearly made to face the stage in a fashion similar to the viewing of a play in a theatre.)

She then took a look around to search for anyone whom she might know.

And soon found Shirayuki and Leticia sitting near the entrance.

“Leticia! You all have come as well?!”

“Aah. It’s also for the reason of evacuating from the hazard, so everyone of [No Name] were welcomed into this castle.”

“I was tending to the injured in the citadel with Lily and the others. After all, the only one among us who could have gone and battled on the front lines is only Leticia-sama.”

Shirayuki’s words caused Asuka’s expression to freeze in place.

“.....battled? Against the Demon Lord who attacked [Kouen City]?”

“I wasn’t the only one. Moreover, I was only a burden to them. If only I could fight harder, Jack-dono would not have gotten hurt.”

Leticia’s shoulders were slumped as she shifted her gaze away. Besides, it was a different story from herself 200 years ago because she did not possess her Divinity anymore. It must have been a tough situation to face up against Azi Dahaka in the frontline battle then.

Asuka who originally wanted to ask for more details on the fight against Azi Dahaka, caught herself and darted her eyes around, seemingly shaken by the news.

“Then, Then, is Jack well?”

“His Game was not completely cleared. Although that has helped to keep his live intact, it is unlikely for him to take part in the battle from now on.”

“Currently, Lily and Willa-dono are looking after him. Although they were in a panic upon seeing the extent of Jack-dono’s injuries, they have now calmed down. We can only leave the rest of the care and treatment into their hands.”

Is that so, Asuka responded. She had also heard that Willa was also having it hard due to the ordeal of being dragged around by the [Ouroboros] people and it seemed like a good idea to exclude the combatants of the [Will o’wisp] in the upcoming fight.

“Saurian Demon King and Roc Demon King..... Karyou-dono were brought over by Croix. That fellow may be dependable but he’s a pervert, so you two better watch out.”

“Wha?”

“Aie?”

They were surprised by the sudden offhanded insult that came from Leticia, whom they knew would not have usually said such words this lightly.

Leticia ignored their reactions and looked around the room.

"But to think that they would choose a theatre as a conference room. Who could have been the person who suggested this."

Upon a closer look, many of them were of the lesser dragons and ghost types of [Salamandra], werebeasts and mythical beasts of [Dragon Greif] who gathered in the room. However, when compared to their opponent who was the three headed dragon, their strength would be much too low.

(If only Almathea was around, I would be able to ask her about various stuff. But where could she have run off to at this time?)

But to see this variety of races coming together in the theatre was not a bad feeling in a way. *What's going to come after this*, Asuka carried a sort of anticipation in her heart as she happily waited for something to start. And before her eyes, there was a little demon, which she had seen before in some place she could not remember, streaking straight through the crowd.

"Lappy.....!"

Leticia had a look of one who had seen her old friend as she named the individual softly.

The little demon known as [Laplace Demon] landed at the centre of the stage and the conference room burst into a cacophony of voices. Why would a [Floor Master] who was in the midst of a restful slumber appear in this place? As such a question started to spread across the hall, Lappy pulled out a microphone that was around the same height as itself to test the sound system.

"Testing..... Testing..... Okay. Everyone, welcome for being here. I'm the command of the [Laplace Demon], who had left for a long time, also known as Lappy III. I'd left on a trip for a little while to journey the Outer World to find my comrades and a pervert and finally made it back. The main demon is still in hibernation, but your battle with the three headed dragon will be supported by us Lappys."

Ooh, the theatre erupted into cheers. That was the enthusiasm from having the great news of having Laplace, who was adept at handling and processing information, as their ally.

However, Leticia's expression changed upon hearing Lappy's words.

(Could it be that.....that Lappy fellow intends to use the same strategy as we had done 200 years ago.....?!)

Having battled against the awakened three headed dragon alongside Lappy in the war 200 years prior, Leticia could not help but feel her anxiety build.

But Lappy III did not even give Leticia a glance as it continued.

"Following this, we shall start the conference on the plan to resist Azi Dahaka. ——But before we start, there are some things that I will need to inform everyone at all costs."

The serious choice of words caused the atmosphere to be one of a confused interest. Lappy, who paused for a moment, had a hesitant look for an instant before looking up again to continue.

"Firstly, in the battle against Azi Dahaka 200 years ago, eighty percent of the combatants have lost their lives. It is also related to the reason for [Salamandra]'s fall to the five digits."

“.....!?”

This time, even the sound of their confusion was let out. Even Asuka and Shirayuki were included in those voices.

Leticia seemed to have understood what Lappy was getting at and her face had drawn taut.

“Secondly, in order to defeat Azi Dahaka, we will require a large battle strength..... which is numbers. We here will be tasked with the responsibility of holding back the clones that appear from the battle of Azi Dahaka against our main force. If we are unable to do that, then we will be sure to lose.”

Lappy plainly stated the truth. The theatre was immediately filled with a sense of tension that stretched to the degree that one would even expect it to snap at any moment. Asuka was also holding her breath as she quietly listened to Lappy’s words.

Confirming with a look that everyone present had understood that fact, Lappy then continued with the last line as the conclusion.

“Thirdly, even if everything were to proceed smoothly..... everyone here would basically lose their lives. There will be those whom I will personally choose from among you. Chosen by me to be the necessary sacrifice. Even then, if you are still willing to fight for Little Garden— please remain in this theatre.”

Part 3

Kasukabe Yō waited by herself in the room which was assigned to her.

She could not do anything before the return of her [Genome Tree] and she could only fidget around, ill at ease, while waiting in the room by herself.

(Izayoi was saved, Asuka and KuroUsagi are also out of danger. It's only down to me. I will be able to stand with the others in battle if I am able to recover my strength. This time for sure, I will defeat the Demon Lord with everyone.....!!!)

Kasukabe Yō was in full spirits. And it was then that,

Kok Kok came the sound of knocking on the door.

“I’m here. Croix-san?”

“No, you’re wrong. I’m —Graiya Greif. Would you know this name?”

Kasukabe Yō frantically attempted to stand but remembered that her legs had no strength to support her. And just as she was pondering about calling for help, Graiya’s calm voice stopped her.

“Wait up. I’m not here to engage in a battle with you. I’ve only accepted to help someone pass a message to tell you about some of stuff.”

“.....stuff? What kind?”

“Regarding your birth and parents..... or more specifically things regarding your mother.”

Hearing the unexpected topic being brought up, Yō felt it like a direct blow to her core.

Indeed, she had heard that Draco Greif was a friend of her father and being the brother of Draco, it was only natural for Graiya to know of her father as well.

However regarding her mother, Yō had never seen her before and only heard of her character and conduct.

“.....Why are you the one passing the message? And, why at this place?”

“It’s Baron Croix who welcomed us in. He promised me to let off the other members of [Ouroboros] if I were to tell you these stuff.”

I see, if that is the case then it would all fit. If one were to be summoned into this Game field, it would surely be the work of a [Host] and he would most likely be telling the truth.

“If you do not want to invite me in, it’s okay for me to just say it from here. Anyways, I’m only here to fulfil the request. The situation of my comrades are also quite urgent and I must return as soon as possible.”

“..... Okay, then just say it from there.”

Not letting down her wariness, she permitted the other to talk with the door between them.

Graiya too started to recount quietly.

“And before I talk about your parents, I will firstly tell you the stuff regarding your [Genome Tree].”

“Regarding the [Genome Tree]?”

“That’s right. Perhaps you may have already noticed, that is the strongest equipment created to resist Demon Lords. As long as one possesses that [Genome Tree], it does not matter if the Game is absolutely absurd and beyond reason because the possessor would always have a fighting chance. This is the Gift that embodies that sort of hope in its creation.”

An equipment that is created to confront any type of battle situation that may be imposed by an unknown under of Demon Lords who control the Gift Games.

The Garuda’s ability which is compatible against Divine and Dragon types is also made possible in the form of an equipment. Then even if it were to match up with an undying foe or something that is “supposed to be impossible to defeat”, as long as one possessed the [Genome Tree], one would never have a zero possibility of winning. It is truly the equipment of hope created for the sake of battling Demon Lords.

“However, the one who gave shape to this Gift isn’t a God. Nor was it your father. The one who gave the command to create the [Genome Tree] is a Demon Lord known to all as the most fearsome and vicious of all Demon Lords— Dystopia.”

“A Demon Lord?”

"Yes. If were to look for the source of the evolution theory, it would surely coincide with the creation theory and it would definitely be related to the gods. In the Outer world, During the early 2000s, it is the case that more than half of the population believed that the gods have created the world. And following that was the resistance of a portion who saw the gods as enemies, the dystopians, who seek to overthrow their foundational belief by creating the Gift which is the [Genome Tree] and that the real purpose behind its creation. A Gift that is created to weaken their beliefs and create a biological weapon. And that command fell upon one of the women who was born in Dystopia— your mother."

"—.....?!"

Upon hearing that sort of revelation that could not be ignored, Yō was now too stumped for words.

However, Graiya continued mercilessly with the revelations.

"In the past, human history was written to have reached the lineage of dystopia. However when history fell into the hands of the resistance, it was then completely rewritten. In the end, humans who arrived at the time flow of dystopia were basically non-existent. But as a trace imprinted on them, humans who grew up in dystopia would have their spiritual powers shaved off and gradually lose their lives. Eventually becoming non-existent. And your mother is not an exception to this."

"....."

"Kasukabe Yō. The reason for your ability to resist the transformation into a monster when you use the [Genome Tree] would most likely be due to that trace. You have not established your own spiritual power. The basis of the spiritual power you possess are the initial Gifts bestowed upon you by

your mother's side. Your [Name] and [Life]. It is only because of the spiritual power from your father that you are able to continue living whereas the inherited Gifts from your mother are deeply imprinted upon your soul. Because all livestock of dystopia are [Humans who are unable to become humans(No Former)]."(magrefnotes: not too sure. Might be Humans who are unable to become anyone.)

Saying all that in one breath, Graiya's words ended there.

His continued presence behind the door would most likely be in wait for Yō's reply.

".....May I ask something?"

"What?"

"Why did you carve the [Genome Tree] into your chest? Wouldn't a normal person become a monster if they were to use it?"

For Yō, that was the most intriguing question of course.

Graiya fell silent for a moment before answering in a monotone.

"..... I, am just like you. I'm depending on this [Genome Tree] to survive. That's all."

"Why is that so?"

"I can only say that it is the curse from my patron god. Anything else about that matter would not be of a concern to you. —I will leave our

conversation as that. The next time we meet, we will not be lenient on you guys anymore, so be prepared for that day."

Saying that, Graiya's presence disappeared.

Sensing the intensity of his determination, Yō couldn't help but tremble as she felt a bad premonition of a battle awaiting her in the future that would be far more intense as compared to her previous encounters.

[No Name] and [Ouroboros], and the battle of the three headed dragon is finally coming to the final stage.

教えて! 白夜叉 先生! ～part2～

白夜叉

フハハハ!
今回も大風呂敷な
箱庭を解説する
『教えて! 白夜叉先生!
part2』が始まるぞ!



齊天大聖

え? 俺と一緒に天岩戸の中でエジプト式
ボードゲームやるんじゃなかつたのか?

やらんわい! それにセネットとかラー坊や
オッシーと大昔にやり尽くしたわ!

じゃあこの古代ローマ式のボードゲームを

おお、ナインメンズモ里斯か! 懐かしいの、って違う!
それも散々やり込んだわ!
ほれ、齊天大聖も司会進行を手伝うのだ!

おおう、マジかよ。そもそも何のコーナーなんだコレ?
というか俺まだ絵にもなってないのにコーナーやるの

箱庭の複雑な事情やら用語やらを解説する
コーナーだの。本編の殺伐とした空気を
払拭するためにおんしも手伝うのだ

えー

やかましい! とにかく始めるぞ!



Please Teach me! Shiroyasha Sensei Part II

Shiroyasha^[1]: “HngHahaha! It’s time for me to begin the explanations of this confusing world of Little Garden in this [Please Teach me! Shiroyasha-Sensei! ~Part 2~] section once again.

Great Sage Equalling Heaven: “Aye? Weren’t you going to play the Egyptian board game with me at Ama-no-Iwato?

Shiroyasha: “Play? Play your head, oh sheesh! Moreover, I’ve already played Senet with that lad, Ra and Osiris to the point of being sick of it!”

Great Sage Equalling Heaven: “Then let’s play this Roman board game instead.”

Shiroyasha: “Ooh, it’s Nine Men Morris, right?! That sure brings back memories, Oi, no, I’m also done playing with that! Hey, Great Sage Equalling Heaven should also come help with the hosting too!”

Great Sage Equalling Heaven: “Ooh, are you sure about that? But what’s this special column for? Do you want me to be host when there isn’t a drawing of me at all in this special column?”

Shiroyasha: “This is a special column to explain all the confusing stuff in the world of Little Garden. And to do away with the intense murderous atmosphere of this volume, you should come and help out! Anyways, let’s start!”

Great Sage Equalling Heaven: “Hai—.” [end of picture convo.]

Q. Astral Gate

Shiro: “Anyone who passes through it will be in another world! It is also one of the few convenient Gifts within the world of Little Garden. And that is the Astral Gate which allows spatial teleportation!”

Sage: “The ability to maintain communications and trade within the vast world of Little Garden is all thanks to these Astral Gates.”

Shiro: “The word “Astral” is a word that refers to the “stars”. Using this gate, an object of the material plane would be converted into an astral body to be transported across the distance in the form of starlight.”

Sage: “Within the concepts of mythologies, astral bodies are what we refer to as the unknown power emitted from our willpower and emotions.”

Shiro: "Well, it's slightly incorrect but fundamentally right."

Sage: "Then, I will leave it to you to summarize it in a simpler way."

Shiro: Mhm. If you want to make it simpler for others to understand, it is a sort of willfulness—eg. me."

Sage: "Oi, Baka, don't talk nonsense."

Shiro: "Aiya, sorry for that just now."

Q. The big three problem children of Little Garden.

Shiro: "Mhm. Although it was mentioned here and there, but it usually refers to these three people.

Queen "Queen Halloween"

Demon Star "Algol"

Half Celestial being "Great Sage Equalling Heaven"

As stated above."

Sage: "Oi, wait a moment you bastard."

Shiro: "Mhm? What's wrong?"

Sage: "It's totally not related to me and yet my name is mentioned? What talking you, you elderly being. Talking about the three big problem children, it has always been Queen, Demon Star and ShiroYoruOu you three. It was ever since I was born too. How would I be in the trio. Are you trying to make me cry, you bastard?"

Shiro: "HngHngHng. That's already an old story. After I was appointed to be a [FloorMaster] 200 years ago, the name of Shiroyasha=Justice has long spread across the lands!"

Sage: "Wuu.... Mah, even if we were to step back a hundred times from there, why would I be the candidate? I'm also quite a famous god known for doing good deeds. Probably."

Shiro: "Mhm. This should be said to be seen as problem children from the viewpoint of the gods rather than that of the other world human's perspective. Mah, and considering your deeds, it is only natural right? Among them are those who are still spiteful for the destruction that you wreaked in the six levels of Hell. For example, the Ashuras and Enmaten^[2] of the 12 Adityas."

Sage: "That, That's not my fault! Um Enmaten that old fogey must have been tricked by some evil companions to write my name into the [Death Pocket]

and that is how it all started. Moreover, the self-proclaimed royalty of the Asura race kidnapped the then 10 year old Karyou-imouto and wanted to do this and that!"

Shiro: "But it's still too much to shave off all the hair and beard of Enmaten and make him huddle on the ground naked right?! And it's the same for the prince of the Asura's^[3]! To tie up all the three heads and six arms before throwing him into the Sanzu River while throwing a banquet, mah, even the young people of today would not do such vulgar and crazy stuff!

Please reflect upon your own actions!"

Sage: "Wuuu.... Although those are the facts, I'm still unable to accept it.....!"

Q. The South Side Floor Master [Avalon]

Shiro: "The knights' Community directly under the command of the [Queen Halloween]'s Flag. It is an organization that inherited the Name and Gifts of the Knights of the Round Table. Numbered within the four digits, it was a strong holder of the [Floor Master] position. It's really a pity that we have lost such a Community."

Sage: "Although they are the Round Table Knights, these knights are not related to the story of King Arthur. And their Community's structure is more complex. The feeling I get from them on my last visit was that they are some sort of Celtic knight organization."

Shiro: "Mhm. If we were to explain it, we would first need to explain why [Avalon] is a Community under the [Queen Halloween] Flag."

Sage: "Aah, I would like to know about that as well."

Shiro: "This has something to do with the cosmology of the Celtic race and their perspective of life and death. Do you remember the explanation on the deriving of Divinity through ancestral worship in the earlier part of the series?"

Sage: "You mean the worshipping of a great ancestor as a God?"

Shiro: "Yes, that's it. If you remember that, then I will just cut straight to the subsequent explanation—the Celts have embedded the trajectory of which the sun traces through the skies onto the concept of life and death. When summer gives way to autumn, the weakening sun will die off in winter and be reborn as a new life. This is very similar to what is written in the Bible."

Sage: "Ah, so it came about from that. The death of the Sun in winter and its subsequent rebirth?"

Shiro: "Mhm. They believe that on October the 31st, which they host the festival of Halloween, the boundaries between their world and another realm will become unstable and their ancestor spirits will be able to pass from the country of the death to the realm of the living. However, the things that come through the veil from the country of the death will not be only those of their ancestor spirits. Hence to protect themselves, they would dress up as monsters to scare off the various Rakshasas and evil spirits that crossed over with their ancestor spirits. And that is the reason for their dress ups."

Sage: "Hou. Then, what has that to do with [Avalon]?"

Shiro: "There's speculation that a playground called [Avalon] is situated at the location where the Sun sets. This theory is that the concept of the sun setting have been superimposed on the rebirth of the heroic spirits who were dead. Hence, inviting the heroic ancestor spirits, who have made their names during their lifetime, to join the Community when they are dead—is the current [Avalon]. In other words, it is the country of the dead that the heroic knights gather at."

Sage: "Hei--. In the end, they have become the knights under the Queen's jurisdiction?"

Shiro: "The Queen's knights are people whom she have selected with qualities that match her liking after a thorough assessment."

Sage: "Then Queen would be really angry about the attack on the Community that was under her very Flag, won't she?"

Shiro: "No, that may not be so. That fellow isn't a proper god per say. Or we can take it that the destruction of [Avalon] might not have any effect on history as well."^[4]

Sage: "May that be so."

Short Story

"KuroUsagi: Those who do not venture into the tiger's den will eventually become bait and only their bones will be left behind.¹¹ Percher: "What's wrong with this team's line-up?" Asuka: "You do not have the rights to say that." Shirayuki: "Let's work together alright?"

"Next up, we will be holding the final Game of [Underwood]'s Harvest Festival, the-- <Great Tree Culinary Competition>! Everyone, are you ready?!"

Shiroyasha stood upon the stage built upon the roots of the Great Tree as she enthusiastically posed while giving her announcement.

Woooooooooooooh!!!! The residents of [Underwood] and the contestants cheered enthusiastically.

The beastmen who were used to dining on their local exquisite cuisines were wearing their aprons today.

And the [No Name]s were also among the participants in this large scale culinary competition which was closely related to the theme of the Harvest festival. Hence they formed teams of three and were split into two teams that entered the contest. And the Team B of [No Name] was—

".....what is this? The Batsu game for new members?"

Percher looked at her assigned teammates and was crestfallen to the point of being speechless. As for the two other members who were in the same team as her, Asuka and Shirayuki folded their arms over their chests as they showed their dissatisfaction as well.

"That's really rude. At least direct your dissatisfaction at the drawing lot results."

"Mhm mhm, there's no need to be so pessimistic. As long as we pool our powers together, defeating the judges will not be a pipe dream. It's time for me to show the real power of one who holds [Divinity]."

"Where are your brains, you breast snake. And what do you intend to achieve by defeating the judges, you Baka!"

It would seem that her state of mind was already in a mess.

Even while looking at them calmly, this matter was only unpleasant and distasteful for Percher. For they were the clumsiest team in terms of their abilities of housekeeping in the Community of [No Name].

Kudou Asuka was a girl who could not cook. That was a fact that they understood on the night before, which was right after the Strong men Dolls incident. She had originally planned to make a normal curry but her attempts have all ended up charred. She then attempted her hand at roasting a turkey and stir-fried vegetables, but they have both ended up the same way as the curry. In the end, it was also the same result for the vegetable soup, which ended up charred. She was surely one who could not make a dish that wasn't charred and it was a miraculous skill indeed.

Whereas the clumsiness of Shirayuki in her maid duties was famous within the Community by the third day. Her hissatsuwaza was the technique to chop cabbages into fine mush. For a person who came up with the excuse of having pondered over the question of "Maybe we can just get more nutrients out of the concentrate of these cabbages" when she chopped those cabbages, it was only one of the examples of her helplessness in housework. And it took a long time to get her used to the idea of julienning cabbages, but her clumsiness was already at the standard that is deemed hopeless for the very idea of creating any dish.

"Are we really thinking about winning when we are like this? Even gods wouldn't be able to do it at this rate. Let's just forfeit. Forfeit this, okay?"

"Then, Then what about you?"

"Yep! At least, I have confidence in my ability to create a cabbage concentrate soup! Can you even come up with any proper dishes?!"

Haah? Percher gave a gangster like drawl while giving them the stare.

It must have been the feeling of unhappiness from being talked to in that way by the clumsy young girl and snake. But Percher was slightly motivated as she put on her apron to stand before the other two.

"Then, let's do this. Since we have come to this, I will just participate in this contest. But I will leave the appetizer and main course to you two. In that way, we will be able to see the difference in our standards at a glance."

"That's, That's fine with me!"

"Okay. We will create a dish that will scare the judges out of their wits."

"Yeah, Yeah, as long as you two do not touch my preparation area. There's no need to help with the cutting, nor do I need anyone to help with the tending of the fire. You two are not to come to my side of the work table,

ever. Whatever comes after this, good luck to you two," Percher waved her hand and left.

The remaining two members looked at each other and held hands.

"Gambatte, Shirayuki! Let's give that polka dotted maid a big surprise!"

"Actually, that is what I would like to ask of you, Asuka-sama! Please make a really explosive and revolutionary dish to astound them all!"

Woooh~!~, they gave a cheer as they clasped their hands. Although their interactions of before were brief, but there was a sense of camaraderie between them in this Game. And it was this sense that made them feel that they might possibly whip up some really good dishes as the delusional duo walked to the ingredients area.

—And so, after an hour later,

The judging area was in an uproar due to the dishes of two individuals.

In contrast, the spectator stands were silent.

Kuro Usagi's lip twitched uncontrollably at the corner. And after a pause, Kuro Usagi, who was assigned with the role of being the MC, finally remembered her job as she said in a straight voice.

"Next, Next up is the set of dishes completed by [No Name]'s Team B! It is named by the [God of Black Death], Percher, as "The something that is indescribable"!"

It couldn't have been more aptly named as that. One could not think of a name besides that which it is named. It was completely impossible to be illustrated in words or picture as one was emitting a noxious smell while the other seemed to be of a shape that was rapidly expanding like the Big Bang theory.

Shiroyasha, who was one of the judges at the event, stared at that thing on her plate as she sucked in a breath of cold air.

"This sure is..... Completely on the other end of the spectrum as compared to Team A."

Stealing a glance at the meal whipped up by Team A as she said it. If one were to put it nicely, it was the fusion of Japanese and Western cuisine. But to put it less kindly, it was just the confusion of different pieces from all places being thrown together as one. Even then, each piece was done perfectly and it now stands as a worthy candidate for winning.

Just one mouthful of this and I will treat myself to that of Team A.

Shiroyasha who gave that muttered pitiful moan, steeled her resolve to put

a mouthful of “The something that is indescribable” into her mouth—and everyone on scene held their breath as they awaited the verdict.

[[Picture: blue with polkadot background, asuka, shirayuki, Percher, kuroUsagi and shiroyasha.

Shiroyasha: “I thought that I would die from it!!”

KuroUsagi: “That’s, That’s a really fearful item.....”

Asuka: “We, We have lost.”

Shirayuki: “But we have won in a certain sense?”

Percher: “What a bunch of fools.....”]] [2]

[[Picture: KuroUsagi, Leticia, Izayoi, Yō.

KuroUsagi: Having lived in a well all its life, the frog swims in the sea.[3]

Izayoi: “What’s this competition about?”

Yō: “No matter what happens, we must not lose.”

Leticia: “I will also be participating yo~.”]]

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Shiroyasha stood upon the stage built upon the roots of the Great Tree as she enthusiastically posed while giving her announcement.

Woooooooooooooh!!!! The residents of [Underwood] and the contestants were cheering enthusiastically.

The beastmen who were used to dining on their local exquisite cuisines were wearing their aprons today.

And the [No Name]s were also among the participants in this large scale culinary competition which was closely related to the theme of the Harvest festival. Hence they formed teams of three and were split into two teams that entered the contest. And the Team A of [No Name] is—

“This sure is quite unbalanced,” Sakamaki Izayoi laughed bitterly.

And standing behind him were Jijochó Leticia and Yō Kasukabe, who was eating the ingredients for their contest as her snacks.

“Mah, it’s the results of the lot drawing for the team assignment, and I’m guessing that Team B is bound to come up with an interesting dish.”

“The pursuit of interesting or amusing stuff is not for the creation of cuisines.”

The free retort from Yō earned a wry smile from Leticia.

And there was no need to nick pick on Leticia for she was the Jijocho who controlled the housework duties of the [No Name] Community.

On the other side, Izayoi and Yō had displayed their skills in the incident with the Strong Men dolls. It was also then that Garol Gandark had acknowledged their skills and implored them to sign up for this cooking competition.

Rolling up his sleeves, Izayoi palmed an apple in his hand while broaching the subject of the plans that the other two might have on the way forward.

“Though that might be true, the people in [No Name] who are best at cooking are all gathered over on this side. There’s no reason for us to not aim for the win.”

“Yeah, I guess. But what are we going to do now?”

Hm. And they simultaneously shared their ideas.

“Irish cuisines tend to dominate the culture of the South Side. Wouldn’t it be an easy win if we use potatoes and oats to whip up some sort of local fare by appealing to the taste of the judges?”

“But Shiroyasha, the head of the judges, is a Buddhist god. Wouldn’t it be better to whip up some Japanese cuisine that stars fish as the main theme?”

“Oi Oi, you people are too cautious with this contest. The essence of cooking is definitely in the meat ingredients! With [Underwood] and its bold appeal as its selling point, there can only be this route for the dish.”

And when Leticia ended off at her rebut, the trio realized the curious atmosphere that they were emitting.

“.....a conflict of ideas, huh?”

“Yeah, A conflict of ideas.”

“Then, how are we going to resolve this? I’m a maid, and I will just leave the final decision to my masters.....”

The trio then looked at each other in the eyes.

Izayoi who hated to lose, Leticia who was professional in her tasks and Yō who liked all types of cuisines.

And the trio who were adamant about their choices, exchanged a glance each before breaking out in giggles.

“Hng Hng. In the end, we are still unable to have a united team effort in this.

“After all, we all like to work by ourselves.”

“Fufu, And that’s the way that I like my masters’ way of doing things. — Well then, let’s just create the dishes of our own within the time limit.

Agreed, Izayoi concurred with a wave of his hand as he set off immediately to his task. And the other two hurried to their individual tasks respectively.

—Following that, after two hours,

Kuro Usagi the MC for the event strode onto the stage.

“I apologize for the wait! But we have now gotten the results of the final game of [Underwood]’s Harvest Festival and it’s time to announce the winner for the <Great Tree Cooking Competition>?”

And immediately after her words fell, the plaza erupted in a frenzy of cheers.

“The prize for the best cuisine goes to— [No Name]’s Team A! The title of the meal is called “Japanese- Western Fusion! It does not matter where the cuisine comes from as long as it is savory!”!

Woooooooooh!!! The cheering intensified for the amazing set completed by the trio that comprised of three main dishes which had unexpectedly received compliments.

The potato bacon pie was done by Izayoi while the deep fried freshwater fish with [Underwood]’s tender leaves was completed by Yō. Lastly, the dish starring the Peryton, a eudemon which is the cross between a deer and a bird, was served in a special broth was created by Leticia. And those were the three dishes that the trio had handed in to be judged.

And at the same time that the victory of Izayoi and his team was announced, the trio who were waiting at the side of the stage were congratulating themselves with an exchange of high-fives.

“Oh my, I did not think that we would win with that sort of arrangement.”

“That’s the power of our friendships.”

“No, didn’t you say that we were to work separately?”

Upon hearing Leticia’s retort, Izayoi and Yō broke into a fit of laughter.

Thereafter, a buffet was held in the plaza where the cuisines of the cooking competition participants were also open for all to try. Instantly, Team A of

Izayoi and the others were showered with praises for their great culinary creation.

On the other hand, the cuisine of Team B— Asuka, Shirayuki and Percher's "The something that is indescribable" was also given praise for those who used it as the ultimate test of courage.

The last banquet of the city of water and the huge tree continued to resonate with laughter and talk even as time passed into the wee hours of the night.

[[picture of Shiroyasha, KuroUsagi, Izayoi, Yō, Leticia.

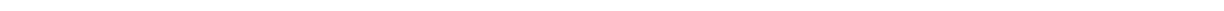
Shiroyasha: "Great job!"

KuroUsagi: "Congratulations to you guys!"

Izayoi: "That's only to be expected."

Yō: "It's the power of friendships."

Leticia: "working separately...."]]



Afterword

Many thanks to all who have gotten themselves a copy of the riotous modern day fantasy novel of the trio who have travelled to another world —<Mondaiji-Tachi ga Isekai kara kuru Soudesu yo?>.

Just this April, it was the third anniversary of this Mondaiji series. I had originally feared that the series would be cut off midway. However now that I think about it, I shouldn't be that worried after all. Even if it were to be rejected, I would be perplexed but would have hoped to finish it gradually anyways.

Furthermore, the serialization of <Comp-Ace>, the manga by Rio Nanamomo has come to a close. Thank you for your hard work for half a year of serialization!

It is still two volumes away from the predicted end of the first arc of the Mondaiji series.

In the next volume, in the last part of the Alliance Flag arc and the Azi Dahaka arc— <Strike! Faster than Starlight!>, please continue to roll in the comments and support.

Izayoi will also be on the front page of the next volume!

舞台裏
次回
予告!!

YES!

いよいよ
連盟旗編も
最終局面！
皆さん、覚悟は
よろしいですか！



当然よ

うん、頑張る



第一部も佳境だな。
腕が鳴るぜ



YES! それでは
皆さん次回予告！

「撃て、星の光より速く！」
お楽しみに！



Kuro Usagi: "It's finally the final part of the Alliance Flag arc! Everyone, have you steeled your resolves?!"

Asuka: "Of course."

Yō: "Mhm, I will work hard."

Izayoi: "The first arc is also moving towards its climax. I can barely wait."

KuroUsagi: "YES! Then, let's all do the volume notice together!"

All four of them: "Please look forward to <Strike! Faster than Starlight!>"

- Taro Tatsunoko



Translator's Notes and References

1. Jump up↑ The name itself refers to Trāyastrīmśa, but has nothing to do with the 33 devas, so I left it in Japanese form.
2. Jump up↑ In other words, the Divine and Earthly, but the former sounds better
3. Jump up↑ The Japanese name for Indra
4. Jump up↑ refers to 12 Devas in charge of guarding the Heavens in Japanese and Chinese Buddhism. They are Indra (or Taishakuten in Japanese), Agni (Katen), Yama (Enmatsuten), Rākṣasa (Rasetsuten), Varuṇa (Suiten), Vāyu (Fuuten), Vaiśravaṇa (Bishamonten), Īśāna (Izunaten), Brahmā (Bonten), pṛthivī (Jiten), Sūrya (Ni-ten), and Candra (Ga-ten)
5. Jump up↑ Roughly means 'Victorious Fighting Buddha'. Left in Japanese to sound better.
6. Jump up↑ If you don't get it, she's saying Siddhārtha, Buddha's given first name. It was actually was written as 釈迦, or Shaka, but that's the Japanese name given to him so I changed it to the original.
7. Jump up↑ Again, Brahmā's Japanese name.
8. Jump up↑ <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/hachi-bushu.shtml#deva> Literally, the Eight Legions. They are the 8 species that guard the Dharma, consisting of Deva, Naga, Yaksa, Gandharva, Asura, Garuda, Kimnara, and Mahoraga.
9. Jump up↑ <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/myo-o.shtml> Literally, the Five Great Wisdom Kings.
10. Jump up↑ What was used was ふざけるな!!! If you have a better translation, please edit.
11. Jump up↑ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amano-Iwato>
12. Jump up↑ In the original text it was Phrase Gate with english letters, but the kanji meant Freeze Gate, so this must be mistake made by the creator. I haven't decided what to do in this case, so for the time being I'm leaving it as it is.
13. History has been divided by the ancient Indian scholars into four eras in a continuous loop. They are the Golden age (Satya Yuga), Silver age (Treta Yuga), Bronze age (Dwapaea Yuga) and Metal Age (Kali Yuga). Among them, the most prosperous era would be the Golden age followed by the Silver age. The metal age is ranked the

lowest in prosperity and it is the end or downfall. After the Metal age, the world would kick start itself into a new Golden age. Details will be added below in Note 1. Thank you [hentai_Shiroyasha] and [Puppeteer of the Blood Night] for providing this information.]

14. The four eras of Hinduism YUGA= era

In the traditional Hinduism belief, there is a unity of time called a Yuga.

The world's time is divided into 4 Yuga—Satya Yuga(or Krita Yuga), Treta Yuga, Dvapar Yuga, Kali Yuga.

During Satya Yuga, everyone is able to feel and know of the power of god. People are able to communicate telepathically and there is no divide between the material world and the world of consciousness. There is no pain or suffering, no war, no religions and there is no sense of time's passing. It can be said to be the golden age of the Humans.

Treta Yuga is the era of spirituality. Man has discovered time, invented tools, and utilised their intellect to rule the world. Telepathy between humans are obstructed and war is born. It is said that the story of <Ramayana> was written in this era.

When it came to the era of Dvapar Yuga, Man started to study science and invent more tools. They also had to start making a choice between the realm of spirituality or materialism. They note the distance between themselves and others around them and interpersonal communications were reliant on language. In this era, the power is held in the hands of women. It is said that Krishna's death signalled the end to this era and that the <Mahabharata> depicted this era in its literature. And at the end of the <Mahabharata>, Humans welcome the age of Kali Yuga.

Kali Yuga is the era of materialism. Man have replaced women to be the power of the world. The chase for materialism has far exceeded the chase for spirituality. Power and superstitions start to rule the spirits of Man. Few know of the presence of gods and the only method for Man to understand god I s is through the use of religion.

[magrefadditional notes: Mother Goddess (eg. Juno)
Check https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother_goddess for more.

Yellow Dragon is mentioned in vol 7 note 63.

15. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: If you noticed the difference from my first translation, good for you. You are very observant indeed. lols, I won't apologize for the misinterpretation since I did not read up to this volume at that time and translations are always interpretations of a text. The changes are mentioned on wikia of this specific Gift Game.]
 16. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: heavenly rock cave=amano-iwato]
 17. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: haori is the outer jacket like portion of the male kimono outfit. If you look at Bleach, the white portion with the squad number of the captain class is the haori.]
 18. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: I will just use Celestial transcendence to denote the process of becoming a Celestial being]
 19. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: the author changed the name a little once again to not anger the gods. Since this move is....]
 20. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: oni kakurenbo is a hide and seek game involving the catching of the demon(oni)]
 21. Jump up↑ [magrefnote: look below for Kali Yuga]
 22. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: I'm using 'his' for now, might be a female but at the moment, just leaving at his till further notice]
 23. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: bolded to denote no translation involved. Author used English.]
-
24. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: yeah, this is not an error, it's a medicine that produces blood!! Sounds really efficient!]
 25. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: This Miss is in bold due to the use of English by the author.]
 26. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: Baron Munchausen was written by German writer Rudolph Erich Raspe. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baron_Munchausen]
 27. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: alpha α and omega Ω are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet respectively.]
 28. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: I'm guessing that it is a pun but it is difficult to translate puns. Dead god and death god are the same words in ch and I'm guessing that's how it is for jap too, so basically he's scolding Croix as a stupid god who deserves to die but making it to sound like the word Death god only.]

29. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: yes, in this case, she is right. If you say yes or no to that thought, it will only make things worse. Try to distract the person with another related topic instead, look below at the tactic Asuka chose.]
30. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: Don Quixote is a character of a Spanish novel by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra during the Golden Age. It follows the adventures of a nameless hidalgo (nobility without a heredity title who owns little real property and were exempted from paying taxes) who reads so many chivalric romances that he loses his sanity and decides to set out to revive chivalry, right the wrongs of society and bring justice to the world under the name of Don Quixote. You might also realize how this name may be symbolic and meaningful for the pirate crew in the anime of One Piece. Almost all the information here have been lifted from Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Quixote, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hidalgo_\(nobility\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hidalgo_(nobility))]
31. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: ch translator red lily notes: It's a sob+ stumble over words.]
32. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: what comes next is something that I'm unsure of... it is only in this part that the translator suddenly uses two headed and three headed interchangeably. My guess is it is all two headed as the typing for two in ch is shuang and three is san, and if he uses the character input program, he would only need to type "s" for the dictionary options to appear. I used to make that mistake a lot in my time as well. But, just for clarification sake, hopefully someone can help to check. I will just use two for now. Because it makes no sense that Azi main body would go all the way out there to search for Kuro Usagi and Asuka.]
33. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: babaa- the rude way of saying old lady,]
34. Jump up↑ (Note: the Japanese word for “thunder” sounds like the Japanese phrase of a “God’s calling”)
35. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: yeah, “two headed dragon”, I know it sounds like a mouthful here, but in Japanese or Chinese, it is only 3 syllables. Would be just plain “dragon”, if it were in English from the start.]
36. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: the sixth cosmic velocity is the speed that a spacecraft from Earth would require to escape the gravitational

pull of the universe. As the universe's mass is undetermined at the moment, it is also a value that is impossible to have an exact number affixed to it.]

37. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: shock is a critical condition brought on by a sudden drop in blood flow through the body. Circulatory system fails to maintain adequate blood flow and diminishes the delivery ability of blood cells in its provision of oxygen and nutrients to vital organs. Taken from www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=5477]
38. Jump up↑ [Note: The original wording is arcadia. Ark to refer to hiding, a shelter and was later known to be the vessel like structure. Whereas adia referred to the God of hell. Summing them up would be the reference to hiding from disaster. It is currently used widely as a name for locations in the Western countries to represent the idea of "paradise".]
39. Jump up↑ [BionicMeerkat note - Made names bold to make it easier to identify who is who. If it seems unnecessary, let me know and I'll remove it.
40. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: Enmaten is also known as Lord Enma. To be more precise, the term Lord Enma was derived from Enmaten. He's also a god who hold control over death in the Hindu mythologies and is equivalent to Hades of the Greeks, or Anubis of the Egyptians. He's also the first Human to experience death as recorded in the <Rigveda> and hence hold power over death. Later, he will be one of the Gods who live in the Heaven's plane while in control over the plane of Yaamaah. Yaamaah is one of the planes of Heaven(level 3), a plane above Touriten(level2). Touriten aka Trayastriṁśā sounds like trayastriṁśat which is the number 33 in Sanskrit. This is because of the 33 sky countries that comprises Touriten. There are 6 levels of Heaven in the desire realm(kāmadhātu), the top three will be above Mount Sumeru(level 4,5,6), the others will be below Mount Sumeru. Mahayana Buddhism have also placed him within the ranks of the 12 Adityas. And following the introduction of Buddhism into China, Enmaten is then assumed to be the god in control of Hell and is called Lord Enma.
41. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: Asura may not be that of the demigods. These Asuras seems to be the malevolent demons alternatively

referred to as

Rakshasas. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desire_realm]

42. Jump up↑ [magrefcomments: killing the dead does not affect history.]
43. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: It is a pun on a famous saying of Nothing ventured nothing gained which will have a direct translation of Those who do not venture into the tiger's den will not get their game. It's my first time seeing this pun.]
44. Jump up↑ [BionicMeerkat notes - Sorry everyone, it seems that Vol 10 is missing some illustrations. I put a placeholder for the first picture at the start of the Short Story, but nonetheless I guess we are short 3 illustrations. I will update the chapter once I find the illustrations.
45. Jump up↑ [magrefnotes: thrown into an unknown place, forced to survive in a new environment]



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